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**“Rethinking Global Sisterhood“**

Discursive Strategies of the World Conferences on Women in Nairobi and Beijing in  
Context of Postcolonial Feminist Critique

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# 1. Introduction

When I first started to juggle ideas about the topic of my thesis, I was interested in postcolonial analyses of Western development discourse and its colonizing effects on countries of the South. At a closer look, the gender discourse strand and its marginalized position in the early 1980ies struck me as particularly productive for examining, in which ways difference is constructed and discussed, embedded in global power structures.

Actualities, living contexts and challenges of women of the South are heterogenous and multifaceted. By taking white middle-class women as universal reference, Western gender discourse ignores and colonizes these lives and produces a monolithic category, the Indian theorist Chandra Mohanty (1985) calls the 'Third World woman'. The criticism of these and similar mechanisms broke several taboos of the (Western) feminist movement: First, the unity of the category 'women' was heavily challenged. Second, the notion of an international patriarchy, affecting women worldwide in the same way was criticized. Last but not least, the idea of a global sisterhood had to be rethought. Postcolonial feminist theory challenged the concept of fixed identities and provided an important basis for several of today's discourses such as intersectionality approaches or the queer theory.

In this context, I would like to take a closer look at discursive strategies in the documents of the third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, and the fourth in Beijing in 1995. However, this thesis does not provide explanations about the causalities between postcolonial feminist critique and the UN gender discourse. It is rather interested in the discursive shifts and developments taking place between the two conferences, considering the criticism of postcolonial feminists. The two main foundations of postcolonial feminist critique on the level of structure and identity provide the theoretical framework for the research questions.

These encompass on a structural level the concept on gender relations: How are gender arrangements/relations described and considered? Which assumptions about power relations are made from a gender perspective?

On the level of identity, processes of generalization and differentiation are of interest: How do the documents deal with identities/categories? Is there systematical differentiation? Do categories such as race, class, religion, etc. play a role?

First of all, this paper discusses postcolonialism with its many implications by approaching the theory from four different perspectives: as historical situation, scientific field, epistemological perspective and political dimension. Subsequently, the concepts of hybridity and colonial power by the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha serve as concrete example of postcolonial thinking in order to get a better idea of its perspective on identity and discourse. This introduction provides the theoretical background for the following elaboration of postcolonial feminist thinking. Based on the two major foundations of postcolonial feminist critique on the level of structure and identity, the research questions for the analysis are developed.

In the methodological part, a closer look is taken at core concepts of the discourse analysis, introducing the notion of power, knowledge and discourse from Michel Foucault's perspective. The critical discourse analysis in general and Siegfried Jäger's approach in particular provide the methodological framework for this thesis and are further discussed in the next chapter.

Finally, the results are conducted as the Nairobi and Beijing documents are analyzed in regards to context, surface of the texts, topics, argumentational strategies and ideological means in context of postcolonial feminist critique. In the conclusion, they are summarized and brought together.

Postcolonial critique exposes and challenges presuppositions and mechanisms of Western science, first and foremost criticizing its claim of universality and neutrality. In this context I would like to emphasize, that this thesis only provides a small fragment of the discussed gender discourse and should not be regarded as complete. It also should be kept in mind, that as a student at the University of Vienna I am embedded in certain power structures that shape my perspective. The fragmental and situated knowledge of this thesis is guided by Donna Haraway's notion of feminist science production:

“Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence, a story that loses track of its mediations just where someone might be responsible for something, and unlimited instrumental power. We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world, where language and bodies both fall into the bliss of organic symbiosis. We also don't want to theorize the world, much less act within it, in terms of Global Systems” (Haraway 1988: 579f)



## 2. Theoretical frame: “The postcolonial”?

*In order to contextualize feminist postcolonial critique, this chapter tries to give an introductory overview of postcolonial theories in general, focusing on their common grounds such as epistemological pillars and political dimensions. The subsequent excursus on cultural scientist Homi Bhabha’s concept of hybrid spaces serves as an example for both theory and method of the postcolonial discourse. Situated in this theoretical background, the chapter finally introduces the main concepts of feminist postcolonial critique and provides the theoretical analyzing frame for the subsequent discourse analysis.*

### 2.1. The big picture of postcolonialism

Defining postcolonialism (also known as post-colonialism, postcolonial critique, postcolonial studies or tricontinentalism) in a short and crisp way turns out to be nearly impossible. Encompassing research in cultural and social studies, literature and linguistics, history and ethnology the elaborated theoretical field is “resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates” (Ashcroft et al. 2006: 1). The cultural scientist Stephen Slemon provides a comprehensive insight into the multitude of connotations of the term postcolonial:

“It has been used as a way of ordering a critique of totalizing forms of Western historicism; as a portmanteau term for a retooled notion of ‘class’, as a subset of both postmodernism and post-structuralism (...); as the name for a condition of nativist longing in post-independence national groupings; as a cultural marker of non-residency for a Third World intellectual cadre; as the inevitable underside of a fractured and ambivalent discourse of colonialist power; as an oppositional form of ‘reading practice’; and (...) as the name for a category of ‘literary’ activity which sprang from (...) what used to be called ‘Commonwealth’ literary studies.” (Slemon 1994: 16f)

All of these different approaches share a critical attitude toward occidental knowledge and a general suspiciousness against so-called grand theories<sup>1</sup>, requiring a high degree of differentiation as a scientific guideline. The following discussion of different perspectives on postcolonial theory does

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<sup>1</sup> Grand Theories attempt overall explanations about complex phenomena.

not claim to be complete, but it rather targets at providing various puzzle pieces for the big picture of ‘the postcolonial’. In sum, the elaborated discourse can be approached on four different levels:



Graph 1: The big picture of postcolonialism

### **2.1.1. The postcolonial as a historical situation**

The oppression of colonization was not only unique in its extraordinary global dimension, but also in its structural effects on power relations worldwide. Developed out of marginalized positions and anti-colonial struggles, postcolonial cultural critique pays particular attention to the reconsideration of this history, focusing on its contemporary configuration. “The entire world now operates within the economic system primarily developed and controlled by the west, and it is the continued dominance of the west, in terms of political, economic, military and cultural power, that gives this history a continuing significance.” (Young 2001: 5) This specific impact of colonization on the power structure and constitution of the present is in simple terms both drive and research interest of postcolonial studies.

### **2.1.2. The postcolonial as an epistemological perspective**

Postcolonial studies can also be regarded as a field of shared epistemological cornerstones and concepts, many of them overlapping with postmodern/structuralist theory. Postcolonial theory completely abandons the essentialist belief in pre-discursively existing truths or facts that shape and determine human relationships. Science is regarded as a highly contested field where knowledge and power intertwine in the concept of truth, constantly changing its determinants of production and assumptions dependent on the current discourse.

“Postcolonial critique marks the moment where the political and cultural experience of the marginalized periphery developed into a more general theoretical position that could be set against western political, intellectual and academic hegemony and its protocols of objective knowledge.” (Young 2001: 65)

Given that the production of knowledge is always situated in a specific power structure (Haraway 1988; Harding 2001), postcolonial theorists examine the assumptions and preconditions constituting Western science (such as objectivity, etc.), that are supposed to be neutral and universally valid. This is not always an easy endeavor considering the ways in which postcolonial thinkers often find themselves in the middle of Western science structures.

Targeting a core concept of Western scientific tradition, postcolonial theory further questions the notion of fixed identities, revealing it as a discursively produced power strategy to (re)create domination regimes. By attributing certain qualities and characteristics to people as a consequence of their ‘nature’, by essentializing their so-called ‘inner core’, the discursive production of the subject and its identity is veiled. Those fixed identities are markers for difference and a product of Othering (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996). Colonial history is regarded as a project “to constitute the colonial subject as Other” (Spivak 1988: 281). Identities are rather thought as fractured and impure (see below).

The focus on discursive power structures as well as cultural and psychological aspects of colonialism does not leave economic and material foundations aside. In fact, postcolonial critique is deeply rooted in Marxisms particularly developed outside the west during anti-colonial struggles, combining its analysis of the material and economic power relationships.

### **2.1.3. The postcolonial as a scientific field**

Postcolonial theory with its most renowned representers Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said is mainly rooted in cultural studies, literature studies and history. As a “product of the clash of cultures that brought it into being” (Young 2001: 10) it is methodologically and theoretically hybrid, attaching great importance to an interdisciplinary and transcultural approach. Postcolonialism experienced a shift in acceptance throughout the years:

“Where the term once referred exclusively to the discursive practices produced by the historical fact of prior colonization in certain geographically specific segments of the world, it is now more of an abstraction available for figurative deployment in any strategic redefinition of marginality.” (Suleri 1992: 759)

Regarding the key issues it must be stated, that there is no postcolonial topic per se. In the General Introduction of the Post-Colonial Studies Reader, the editors sketch their research focus as follows:

"Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is 'essentially' post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field." (Ashcroft et al. 2006: 2)

### **2.1.4. The postcolonial as a political dimension / active agency**

Having identified the power relations evolving from the historical situation of colonialism as one of the main epistemological interests, postcolonial theory carries the critique from merely observing to taking action. Postcolonialism is a political position “which embodies an active concept of intervention within such oppressive circumstances.” (Young 2001: 57) This ranges from a close relationship with anti-colonial liberation movements to active political engagement of postcolonial theorists aside from the ivory tower of science production. The recovering of the lost voices of the marginalized and oppressed is of crucial importance, made visible by tracing their living conditions beyond the borders of dominant, hegemonic history. The British historian Robert J.C. Young emphasizes the great importance of postcolonial critique to politically operate both inside and outside the west in order to adapt to the dissolving inner/outer dichotomy between colonialists and

colonized. (Young 2001: 65). Slemon understands postcolonialisms mostly “as an object of desire for critical practice”, as a “shimmering talisman” (Slemon 1994: 17) for critical science. In sum, Young points out the three main concerns of political postcolonial theory:

“First, investigating the extent to which not only European history but also European culture and knowledge was part of, and instrumental in the practice of colonization and its continuing aftermath. Second, identifying fully the means and causes of continuing international deprivation and exploitation, and analyzing their epistemological and psychological effects. Third, transforming those epistemologies into new forms of cultural and political production that operate outside the protocols of metropolitan traditions and enable successful resistance to, and transformation of, the degradation and material injustice to which disempowered peoples and societies remain subjected.” (Young 2001: 69)

*As an example of postcolonial theory both on a methodological and theoretical level, some ideas of the Indian cultural theorist Homi Bhabha are now to be closer examined. The notion of hybridity and his analysis of the colonial discourse provide an insight in core concepts of postcolonial thinking.*

## **2.2. Excursus: Hybrid spaces – “not quite, not white”**

The Indian cultural theorist Homi Bhabha (2005) examines primarily the interspace, the impure, the unexpressed that are distinct for the postcolonial discourse. A crucial notion in his conception of the colonial discourse is the ambivalence between order and confusion, or change and persistence, being expressed on different levels. The otherness, the cultural and ethnic difference is structured in these dichotomic ways. This paradox way of presentation, the so-called fixity, uses two different practices: On the one hand, the ontological existence of difference is assumed, the universally valid, the substantial facts that do not need further explanation. A bunch of attributes stigmatizes the colonial population as ahistoric, everlasting category with no need for further evidence. On the other hand, this difference must be practiced again and again in a “daemonic repetition” (Bhabha 2005: 94), “as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.” (Bhabha 2005: 95). The psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon formulates the fixity of the colonized subject as a sign/mark for negative difference in his well-established statement: “Wherever he goes, the Negro remains a Negro.” (Fanon 1980: 71 quoted in Bhabha 2005: 108)

Bhabha identifies the stereotype as one of the main strategies of the colonial discourse, serving as an important interface for the powerful ambivalence:

“For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency; ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.” (Bhabha 2005: 95)

Bhabha does not regard the stereotype as the simple construction of a “wrong” picture, a particularly negative interpretation of phenomena on the level of perception effecting the discrimination of a certain group. The stereotype rather serves as a strategy of reconciliation for the unbearable conflict of difference, working like a fetish in a subconscious identification process: The basic assumption “All people are of the same colour/ethnicity/culture/history” is re-created by the complex dynamics of recognition and denial of difference. Bhabha's interest particularly lies in the process of subjectification driven and framed by the ambivalent practices of stereotyping.

“The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is in the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces.” (Bhabha 2005: 118)

Bhabha calls this specific manifestation of the stereotype the “articulation of multiple belief” (Bhabha 2005: 115), being torn between repulsion and fascination due to various ambivalent strategies of recognition and refusal. From the background of this process emerges a mechanism suitable for subversive resistance against authority: Defined as the “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*” (Bhabha 2005: 122), the mimicry fulfills a double function. On the one hand the disciplinary actions and regulation of bodies performed by the mimicry serve as a visualized sign of colonial power. On the other hand however, mimetic behaviour questions the norm of the colonial discourse: “The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.” (Bhabha 2005: 126) Mimicry does not hide or suppress difference, it rather discloses similarities in a metonymic way. By repeating instead of re-presenting, the mimicry rejects an essence, does not hide an identity behind its mask but drags the ambivalence of the colonial

discourse into light. It is there, in the interspace of the “almost the same, but not quite” or “not quite/not white” (Bhabha 2005: 131), where Bhabha senses the potential for resistance.

### **2.2.1. Hybridity – the destabilizer of colonial power**

At this point Bhabha introduces the key concept of his theory: the hybridity as a discursive effect of colonial structuring. The schism between the one, true, universal culture and its degenerated, bastard-like counterpart demands the strategy of denial, “where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid.” (Bhabha 2000: 159) The hybridity is the mixed, the bastard-like, the impure that settles in the colonial discourse strands and reflects the productivity of colonial power. It evolves from the collision of the imperium’s authority with the “uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence, cultural and even climatic differences” (Bhabha 2005: 161), destabilizing and alienating the symbols of colonial power.

“Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor – a negative transparency.” (Bhabha 2005: 159)

Bhabha’s complicated writing style requires a lot of knowledge from the reader and is therefore a highly elitarian form of science production (he shares that with other postcolonial colleagues such as Spivak). However, his particularly differentiated way of thinking, applying the notion of hybridity not only on content, but also on the creational process of theory-production, proves to be a good example for postcolonial theory as a whole. Now, in this epistemological background, feminist perspectives come into play.

### **2.3. *Feminist postcolonial theory***

Just as postcolonial theory as a whole, the heterogeneity and variety of the postcolonial feminist field does not allow illegitimate generalization and the representation as a monolithic block. In short, the

multitude of interests of postcolonial feminists, including women of color, black feminists, postcolonial thinkers as well as women's activists in the development-movement, can be summed up as follows:

“Feminist postcolonial theory has engaged in a two-fold project: to racialise mainstream feminist theory and to insert feminist concerns into conceptualizations of colonialism and postcolonialism. Feminist activism and struggle including most pertinently struggles with other feminists, is where we situate ourselves: these are our intellectual antecedents, the ideas that formed us.” (Lewis and Mills 2003: 3f)

Feminist postcolonial theory concentrates on the marginalized, both by criticizing the (post)colonial discourse in terms of its gender-blindness and criticizing the Western feminist discourse in terms of its eurocentristic and patronizing universalism: “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.” (Spivak 1988: 287) In the next section of this thesis I introduce a partial and incomplete view of important feminist concepts, situated in the postcolonial discourse.

### **2.3.1. The colonist move**

The Indian theorist Chandra Mohanty is probably known best for her influential pamphlet “Under Western eyes” (2004), focusing on the colonization of women from third-world countries by white Western scholars and feminists. Written in 1985, the text examines Western feminist canon documents with a special focus on the development discourse and unveils their constitutive assumptions. As a feminist of colour, Mohanty takes a closer look at the differences within feminist theories as well as the discursive power effects resulted from the unequal locations of the speaking protagonists. Interwoven with the development-discourse, Mohanty's analysis is both methodological and in regards to content: The critique is mainly targeted at the construction of the Third World woman as a basic analytical category, created in relation to the normative referent of the white Western feminist. By producing “a singular, monolithic subject” (Mohanty 2004: 17) Western theorists reduce and colonize the lives and heterogeneity of women in the Third World, simultaneously strengthening their own position at the center. As Gayatri Spivak phrases it in her famous essay “Can the subaltern speak?” (1988): “Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine



nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization.” (Spivak 1988: 306). It is here where Mohanty locates the colonist move:

“By contrasting the representation of women in the Third World with what I referred to earlier as Western feminisms’ self-presentation in the same context, we see how Western feminists alone become the true ,subjects’ of this counterhistory. Third World women, in contrast, never rise above the debilitating generality of their ‘object’ status.” (Mohanty 2004:39)

For this lack of differentiation, Mohanty blames the universalistic approach of Western theory as well as the overestimation of the scholarship’s impact on other cultures. Additionally, women of colour tend to be represented as powerless victims, exposed defenselessly to male violence and poverty. The editors of “Feminisms and Development” describe the stereotype of the African woman, “whose discursive position as perpetually poor, powerless and pregnant works to place African women in general as illiterate victims of national systems of resource distribution and disadvantage.” (Cornwall et al. 2007: 8) They are “so lacking in agency and in such political and economic deficit, that only development can rescue them” (ibid), which brings the authors to the conclusion: “Powerless described in this way by outsiders simply serves to reinforce it.” (ibid)

### **2.3.2. Identifying essentialisms**

The assumption of a universal patriarchal system that permeates Western feminism, is the center of heavy critique in postcolonial feminism: “There is, it should be evident, no universal patriarchal framework that this scholarship attempts to counter and resist – unless one posits an international male conspiracy or a monolithic, ahistorical power structure” (Mohanty 2004: 20). However, Mohanty identifies “a particular world balance of power within which any analysis of culture, ideology, and socioeconomic conditions necessarily has to be situated.” (ibid) By reducing the heterogeneity of women of South to the category of the ‘Third World woman’, struggling against the cross-cultural suppressing system of patriarchy, Western feminists appeal to the so-called Third World difference: “that stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries” (Mohanty 2004: 19). On this basis, Mohanty directs the critique at three fundamental analytical principles: First of all, the presupposition of ‘the woman’ as a coherent, pre-

discursive, cross-cultural category regardless of race, age, class etc. neglects the living conditions of women in the Third World. The notion of gender or sexual difference implied by this assumption is not to be transferred and generalized unconditionally to all parts of the world: “Women are constituted as women through the complex interaction between class, culture, religion, and other ideological institutions and frameworks” (Mohanty 2004:30), not merely as a result of their alleged sexual difference or the economic system. In their canonic text “Development, Crises and Alternative Visions” (1987) for the Southern network “Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era” (DAWN), the gender scientists and political activists Gita Sen and Caren Grown blow the same trumpet:

“For many women, problems of nationality, class and race are inextricably linked to their specific oppression as women. Defining feminism to include the struggle against all forms of oppression is both legitimate and necessary. In many instances gender equity must be accompanied by changes on these other fronts. But at the same time, the struggle against gender subordination cannot be compromised during the struggle against other forms of oppression or relegated to a future when they may be wiped out.” (Sen and Grown 1988: 19)

Mohanty’s second presupposition provides so-called proof of validity beyond cultures on a methodological level – incorrect generalizations, a lack of situating specific concepts such as reproduction or family structures in their cultural context as well as the confusion of gender as an analytical category with the proof of its universal existence. Last but not least, Mohanty criticizes the ideological and strategic way in which power relations are read by Western feminists: Unlike Foucault’s structural concept<sup>2</sup>, power is regarded as something you either possess (read: if you are a man) or you lack of (read: if you are a woman). This notion makes it rather easy to conceal the power structures within the feminist theory, both ignoring and denying specific inequalities in the international discourse. Mohanty’s credit does not merely consist in the specific analysis of paternalizing and colonizing mechanisms in the documents of Western feminist development agents, but in the raise of voice for a differentiated view on power relations within a discourse that saved its critical potential usually for the outside, the patriarchy, the socioeconomic inequalities between men and women. As the feminist scientist bell hooks puts it so aptly:

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault’s notion of power is further discussed in chapter 3.

“All too frequently in the women’s movement it was assumed one could be free of sexist thinking by simply adopting the appropriate feminist rhetoric; it was further assumed that identifying oneself as oppressed freed one from being an oppressor. To a grave extent such thinking prevented white feminists from understanding and overcoming their own sexist-racist attitudes toward black women. They could pay lip service to the idea of sisterhood and solidarity between women but the same time dismiss black women.” (bell hooks 1981: 8-9 quoted in McEwan 2001: 98f)

In sum, the main cornerstones of postcolonial feminist critique can be concentrated in two points that serve as part of the analytical framework of the following discourse analysis.

<p><b>Structure:</b> Gender Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the assumption of a universal patriarchy, affecting women all over the world in the same way</li> </ul>
<p><b>Identity:</b> Differentiation &amp; Generalization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women worldwide are a coherent group, connected through their gender</li> <li>Lack of consideration of categories such as race, class, nation</li> <li>Third World women as monolithic subject</li> </ul>

Graph 2: Two foundations of feminist postcolonial critique

### 2.3.3. Intersectional approaches

As postcolonial and black feminist critique was targeted at the fact that western feminism merely focused on the oppression experience of white middle-class women, the co-constitution and interaction of socially differentiating categories were brought into the focus of the scientific debate (Lutz et al. 2010). On the one hand, the discourse was shaped by the presumption that the explanation for existing inequalities cannot be reduced to master categories that ground in a hierarchical ranking of social inequalities (Winker and Degele 2010). On the other hand, the interaction of inequalities was regarded as more complex than a simple addition of categories such as terms like ‘double burden’ or ‘multiple discrimination’ seem to suggest (Hancock 2007; Walgenbach 2007). In the temporary debate, several terms refer to different concepts and

epistemological roots. Diversity or diversity management is mostly used in an entrepreneurial context, focusing on the utilization of human resources (Wetterer 2003). The term intersectionality was developed by the US-American jurist Kimberly Crenshaw (1991) as a metaphor of intersecting power axis and it has made quite a career especially in the German-speaking context. This concept was challenged by the notion of interdependency, which directs the attention towards the interaction of those dependencies that continue to exist beyond the intersections. Categories of inequality are considered as interdependent and relational: “Damit werden *Beziehungen* von Ungleichheit bzw. Marginalisierungen in den Vordergrund gestellt, während Intersektionalität im Sinne Crenshaws sich auf bestimmte Sektionen oder Schnittmengen konzentriert und somit tendenziell von isolierten Strängen ausgeht“ (Walgenbach 2007: 9). Due to their specific context of development, intersectional analyses mainly focus on the triad race, class and gender (Raab 2010), however the inclusion of categories such as disability or age continually takes place.

### **3. Methodological frame: Discourse theory**

*In a next step, the methodological frame of this thesis is introduced. For a sufficient overview it seems necessary to situate the concrete method of analyzing in a broad perspective on discourse theory. After the discussion of fundamental concepts such as power and knowledge, the critical discourse analysis and Siegfried Jäger's method of analysis as methodological framework of this thesis is elaborated.*

#### **3.1. Core concepts of discourse analysis**

##### **3.1.1. Power – a productive force**

The core of discourse analysis is the specific notion of power that underlies and structures the analyst's perspective on the character and configuration of social (inter)action and its discursive manifestation. Michel Foucault's theoretical considerations marked an important turning point in the concept of power. He radically broke with the – amongst others marxistly influenced – idea that power is possessed by a privileged group of individuals, who exercise it against others. Foucault develops a whole new approach by regarding power not as a form of negative repression, imposed by those who own it on others who do not, but as a process inherent to social relations.

“[D]ie Macht ist nicht etwas, was man erwirbt, wegnimmt, teilt, was man bewahrt oder verliert; die Macht ist etwas, was sich von unzähligen Punkten aus und im Spiel ungleicher und beweglicher Beziehungen vollzieht. Die Machtbeziehungen verhalten sich zu anderen Typen von Verhältnissen (ökonomischen Prozessen, Erkenntnisrelationen, sexuellen Beziehungen) nicht als etwas Äußeres, sondern sind ihnen immanent. Sie sind einerseits die unmittelbaren Auswirkungen von Teilungen, Ungleichheiten und Ungleichgewichten, die in jenen Verhältnissen zustande kommen, und andererseits sind sie die inneren Bedingungen jener Differenzierungen. Die Machtbeziehungen bilden nicht den Überbau, der nur eine hemmende oder aufrechterhaltende Rolle spielt – wo sie eine Rolle spielen, wirken sie unmittelbar hervorbringend.“ (Foucault 1977: 93)

According to his conviction power is not exclusively negative, but it has positive productive effects and is a driving force of and behind human relationships. Power flows through structures, actions and does not even stop at the human body. Especially the so-called inner ‘core’ of a person,

supposed to be the last retreat and shelter from power, turns out to be both its aim and interface. Power can also be traced at places that seem unsuspecting. It cannot be specifically localized in institutions or systems of dominance, but fully permeates them as well as the individual itself. The concentration and compression of power at certain points of social structure evokes power relationships that are constantly discursively altered. This means that you cannot elude power: there is no 'outside' of power, no better position free of domination and power, as for example feminist standpoint theorists have claimed (Harding 2001). However, Foucault's comprehensive concept of power also sheds light on the room to maneuver for underprivileged individuals or groups. It is not about the struggle to gain power, to snatch it away from others, but about rethinking the own position in the web of power relationships and creating new and altering existing discourses. Power relationships "können nur kraft einer Vielfalt von Widerstandspunkten existieren, die in den Machtbeziehungen die Rolle von Gegnern, Zielscheiben, Stützpunkten, Einfallstoren spielen" (Foucault 1977: 96). They constitute themselves in the conflictual area between freedom and force, emancipation and suppression, violence and liberation.

### **3.1.2. Knowledge – a product of context**

Foucault's concept of power is closely interwoven with the notion of knowledge. Knowledge is always produced in interdependency with power, embedded in its structural network: "[P]ower produces knowledge, and in turn, knowledge produces power" (McLaren 2002: 39). This perspective has significant implications mainly for the epistemological point of view. Foucault opposes the positivistic idea that so-called reality can be described in terms of objectively right or wrong, that the true essence of reality can be approximated by verification or falsification. There is no truth, there is no ontological essence that can be found out and dragged into light. Knowledge and the concept of truth is always a product of historical context and societal struggles for interpretative sovereignty.

### **3.2.3. Discourse – flows of knowledge**

At this point a new notion enters the stage: The interconnection between knowledge and power is one of the main fundamentals of the concept of discourse. Discourse means the accumulation and concentration of related enouncements about a range of topics that are historically as well as socially

positionable and (especially in the scientific area) aim at social recognition (Ludewig 2002: 92). In a much shorter way, the German discourse analyst Siegfried Jäger defines discourses pictorially as "flows of knowledge through time" (Jäger 2009: 37). Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough consider discourse as "social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258), characterized by the specific dialectical relationship between

"a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it: The discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. That is, discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it."  
(Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258)

In this context it is important to stress, that in this thesis discourses are not regarded as "second-class material reality (...), passive media into which reality is imprinted" (Jäger 2009: 36). Objects of knowledge do not exist pre-discursively, they are rather generated by the discursive regulation of events and practices (Bublitz 1999). In contrast to linguistic constructivism, however, it is not about denying the materiality of things, bodies, etc. but about emphasizing the materiality of discursive production: "It is like King Midas with his gold: everything he touched turned into gold. Similarly, everything that human beings assign meaning to becomes a particular kind of reality, according to the meaning it was assigned" (Jäger 2009: 42).

So far I have stated that a discourse is social practice rather than an object and productive reality rather than reflective media, structuring social interaction as well as being structured by it. In a next step power comes into play again. Discourses are constantly interfering with power in a mutually dependent relationship: "Die Diskurse ebensowenig wie das Schweigen sind ein für allemal der Macht unterworfen oder gegen sie gerichtet. Es handelt sich um ein komplexes und wechselhaftes Spiel, in dem der Diskurs gleichzeitig Machtinstrument und –effekt sein kann, aber auch Hindernis, Gegenlager, Widerstandspunkt und Ausgangspunkt für eine entgegengesetzte Strategie." (Foucault 1977: 100) Amongst others, power shows itself in the limits of what is sayable and what not in a specific discourse at a given time. Truth turns out to be a discursive product, constantly being negotiated and therefore always has to be examined in its historical context. The power of

discourses does not spare human beings, it flows through their bodies, their appearance, their gender, their subjectivity.

### **3.2. The critical discourse analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), rooted in Cognitive Science, Linguistics, Philosophy and Psychology, emerged in the 1990ies as an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented project, its main representatives being Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, Siegfried Jäger and Teun van Dijk. Basically CDA is interested in rules, strategies and normative claims of discourses and their connection to power relations in social structures. The German historian Achim Landwehr identifies the “Erkenntnisgrundlagen einer Zeit, eines Territoriums oder einer Gesellschaft“ (Landwehr 2004: 132) as the main target of discourse analysis, complexes of knowledge that are taken for granted without questioning their genesis or normative implications.

“Insofern ist das Ziel dieses Ansatzes in gewisser Weise ein paradoxes, weil ungewohntes. Indem die historische Diskursanalyse sich auf diejenigen Gegebenheiten konzentriert, die zu einem bestimmten historischen Zeitpunkt als ‚wahr‘ und ‚wirklich‘ gewußt wurden, stellt sie sich nicht die Aufgabe, Verdecktes zu entdecken oder Verborgenes erscheinen zu lassen. Vielmehr wendet sie sich den Positivitäten zu und versucht das ans Tageslicht zu holen, was in einem Maße selbstverständlich und unmittelbar geworden ist, das es gerade deswegen nicht mehr wahrgenommen wird.“ (Landwehr 2004: 171)

What seems to be of great importance to CDA theorists is the fact that they share a demand for critique, in contrast to other discourse theories. In this context, taking a closer look on the implications behind the idea of critical science can contribute to a better understanding of the epistemological perspective of critical discourse analysts.

#### **3.2.1. What is critical in CDA?**

“Als Kernproblem einer Diskursanalyse, die sich den Anspruch stellt, kritisch zu sein, stellt sich die Frage, was Diskursanalyse mehr zu leisten imstande ist als die ‚Beschreibung von Sachverhalten‘. Die Antwort lautet *zunächst*: Nichts!“ (Jäger 2004: 222) First of all, the description of circumstances Jäger mentions is a critical action per se. CDA is interested in questions like:



Potential research questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On which normative principles and preconditions is a discourse based?</li> <li>- What is sayable and what not at a given time and place?</li> <li>- What is regarded as true or not true?</li> <li>- On which normative assumptions does the conception of truth rely?</li> <li>- What is the explicit or implicit concept of a person, a subject, a body in a specific discursive situation</li> </ul>

Table 1: Questions of interest for the CDA

Dragging these basic pillars of a specific discourse into light and deconstructing supposed given facts is an important condition for social change. Secondly, CDA emphasizes the significance of currently reflecting the own position in the scientific process. Researchers and scientists do not act in a power-vacuum, but are entangled in a hierarchical web, usually occupying higher positions in society. Critical discourse analysis must be examined “as potentially embedding the beliefs and ideologies of the analysts and therefore guiding the analysis towards the analysts’ preconceptions“ (Wodak 2009: 31f). Economic, political or other influences structure their work as well as – of course – the discourse of their scientific background. “Naming oneself ‘critical’ only implies specific ethical standards: an intention to make their position, research interests and values explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible, without feeling the need to apologize for the critical stance of their work“ (Wodak 2009: 7).

This thorough and comprehensive disclosure of usually implicit standards and norms in the scientific process is especially significant for another problem confronting the researcher. As both an epistemological and methodological perspective on the connection between power and knowledge, discourse analysis finds itself in the area of conflict between discovering and naming discursive power relations and on the other hand strengthening and adjusting them. Sometimes discourse analysis even initially produces discourses.

“Die Diskursanalyse schafft sich ihre Gegenstände – historische Diskurse im Moment ihres Erscheinens – selbst; sie analysiert die Diskurse, die sie selbst erst herstellt und die sie als Diskurse nicht in der Gesellschaft vorfindet. Was sie zunächst vorfindet, sind Monumente in ihrer Seltenheit, Singularität und in einem Feld der Äußerlichkeit. Meine These ist daher, dass Diskursanalyse immer zugleich Gesellschaftsanalyse oder Gesellschafts-,Theorie’ im Sinne einer ‚Beobachtung zweiter Ordnung’ ist und

diese Diskurse als ‚Selbstbeobachtungen oder Selbstbeschreibungen einer Gesellschaft‘ (...) analysiert.“  
(Bublitz 1999: 29)

Therefore, it is of utter importance to avoid the trap of considering oneself in a pseudo-neutral scientific position, merely describing matter of facts in a research process. Science is both constituted by and influential on society and it needs to keep a careful eye on these effects.  
Discourse analysis

“(...) produziert nicht Wahrheiten, sondern Aussageereignisse, die selbst Teil eines (...) Diskurses sind. Als wissenschaftlicher *Diskurs über Diskurse* unterliegt sie ihrerseits sozialen Strukturierungsprozessen, d.h. spezifisch situierten Möglichkeiten und Zwängen der Aussageproduktion – etwa im Hinblick auf die Transparenz methodischer Schritte – die dann zum Gegenstand weiterer Beobachtung gemacht werden können.“ (Keller 2004: 61)

In summary, critical discourse analysis targets at the disclosure of rules and regulations of an examined discourse and at the specific role as a scientist being embedded in power structures. In the words of the Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak, CDA is “fundamentally interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language. (...) CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse).“ (Wodak 2009: 10)

### **3.3. Concrete frame of analysis: Siegfried Jäger's approach**

While scanning literature about the state of the art of critical discourse analysis, the operationalisation developed by the German scientist Siegfried Jäger soon struck me as most promising for my research project. Jäger grounds his theoretical assumptions mainly in the work of Michel Foucault, completing it with the activity theory of the psychologist A.N. Leontjew which defines the subject as the connection between discourse and material reality (Jäger 2009). Jäger is also significantly influenced by Jürgen Link, whose distinction between special discourse and interdiscourse he adopts. While special discourses are characterized by their location in the scientific field, interdiscourses are the result of the opposed tendency of de-differentiation. Link identifies the function of the latter in establishing ties beyond scientific, differentiated borders for subjects and describes the interdependence between the two types of discourses as follows: “Je differenzierter das

moderne Wissen und je weltkonstitutiver seine technische Anwendung, umso wissensdefizitärer, wissensgespaltener, orientierungsloser und kulturell peripher sind moderne Subjekte.“ (Link 2005: 87) The interdiscourse serves as a structure of reintegrated, modified knowledge, hereby being constantly fed by certain elements of special discourses.

Jäger works with a variety of notions that are centered at the core of his discourse theory and thus have to be further contemplated.

### **3.3.1. The structure of discourse**

Discourse strands are considered as “flows of discourse that centre on a common topic“ (Jäger 2009: 46). They differ from the concept of discourse mainly by their location at the level of concrete utterances (*énonciations*) while discourses are placed at the more abstract level of statements (*énoncés*). Discourse strands can be examined either in a synchronic analysis that is basically interested in the regulations of what is sayable at a given time in a sort of cross-section through the discourse. These borders are called discursive limits. The diachronic analysis, on the other hand, aims at reconstructing the genesis of a topic. A discourse strand is formed by a multitude of *discourse fragments*, referring to a (part of a) text with a particular topic. One text can contain various discourse fragments that are usually entangled with each other, forming a ‘discursive knot’. An example thereof can be found in the everyday discourse about the muslim headscarf, where the discourse strands of immigration, women and cultural claims are significantly interwoven. Sciences, politics, media, everyday life, etc., as social locations are called ‘discursive planes’, providing a basis on which discursive strands operate.

Crucial for discourse analysis is the identification of so-called ‘discursive events’. Keeping in mind that certainly all events are rooted in discourse, their distinctiveness lies in their significant influence on the further development of a discourse. An event counts as discursive if “it appears on the discourse planes of politics and the media intensively, extensively and for a prolonged period of time“ (Jäger 2009: 48). Jäger, for instance, marks the Chernobyl disaster as an important discursive event for a variety of discourses about environment, new technologies and so forth, changing Germany’s politics toward nuclear energy in a profound way.

The protagonists participating in a discourse (such as individuals, institutions, stakeholders, etc.) speak from a distinctive ideological position, the ‘discourse position’. Their variety depends on the hegemony of a certain discourse: “Within a dominant discourse, discourse positions are fairly

homogeneous, which itself is already an effect of dominant discourse“ (Jäger 2009: 49). Hence the interaction between individuals and discourse positions is mutual. While subjects obtain certain positions in a discourse, “discursive positions contribute to and reproduce the discursive enmeshments of subjects“ (Jäger 2009: 549) as well.

Jäger identifies the disentanglement of the complex network of the ‘overall societal discourse’, formed by all interwoven discourse strands together, as the main goal of discourse analysis (Jäger 2009: 50).

### 3.3.2. Concrete analysing

After choosing both a subject matter and a discourse plane fitting to the particular research interest, typical discourse fragments are to be identified. Jäger suggests five steps of analysing the material which of course can and should be modified considering the specific research context:

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#### Five steps of analyzing

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1. Context and institutional framework
  2. Surface of the text
  3. Rhetorical means
  4. Content and ideological statements
  5. Interpretation
- 

Table 2: Five steps of analyzing

#### 1. Context and institutional framework

Each discourse fragment is situated in a specific institutional context that is contemplated at this point of analysis. This includes a closer look on the author and his/her/their position as well as status, a concrete consideration of the medium and the occasion of the particular text and how it is connected to potential discursive events or other discourse strands.

#### 2. Surface of the text

In a first step of editing the text, particular attention is paid to the graphic design including layout, pictures, headlines etc. as well as the structure of the document. Also, addressed topics and possible connections to discourse strands as well as their entanglement are identified.

### 3. Rhetorical means

This point deals with a variety of questions: Which vocabulary and style is used in the text? Which form of argumentation strategy does the text follow? Which implications and allusions does the author use? In which way are idioms, sayings, clichés, stereotypes installed and which references are made? The main aim is the analysis of routines and regularities reproducing a discursive strand. Especially rhetorical means referring to a reader's previous knowledge or specific norms are valuable for a discourse analysis: "Sie können sozusagen als ‚Führen ins Bewußtsein‘ für andere Inhalte dienen, indem diese anderen Inhalte an sie gleichsam angekoppelt werden und so mit ihnen (...) in den diskursiv erzeugten Wissenshorizont (...) hineintransportiert werden" (Jäger 2004: 181).

### 4. Content and ideological statements

This step focuses on the explicit and implicit ideological concepts and attitudes of a text. Depending on the specific research interests, the concepts of humankind, gender, society, technology, truth, science, etc. are examined closely. "Solche Verdichtungen innerhalb der eigenen Diskursposition können wichtige ‚Duftmarken‘ für die Interpretation darstellen und verdienen daher besondere Beachtung" (Jäger 2004: 184).

### 5. Interpretation

In a final assessment the findings are set in an overall context and interpretations regarding the big picture of the discourse strand are made. Which motivation, goal and message are transported by the discourse fragment? In which discursive context is it situated? How can the relationship to the hegemonial discourse be described? Which social conditions does the text represent? "Usually, the interpretations of the single aspects fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and form a unitary picture" (Jäger 2009: 56).

## 4. Results

### ***4.1. Context and institutional framework***

The United Nations consist of a very complex system of instruments, declarations, conventions, commissions, committees, agencies and programmes, dealing with the advancement of women and gender issues on various levels. To situate the World Conference in Nairobi and Beijing properly in both a structural and historic context, a compact overview of the women and gender related history of the UN-system seems necessary.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, proclaiming incontestable rights to which all humans are entitled. “However, the fact of women’s humanity proved insufficient to guarantee them the enjoyment of their internationally agreed rights“ (UN 2010). Due to pressure by international NGOs and women’s activists, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), originally established in 1946 as a subcommission, gained the status of a full commission in 1947 (UN 2010), creating the first formal structure of women as a “separate, diplomatic force in the UN arena“ (West 1999: 179). Due to its comprehensive connection with the international women’s movement and the nexus of NGOs, the commission had a unique standpoint among UN bodies (Galey 1995: 14). The mandate of the CSW initially focused on legal equality for women and elaborated several conventions, reaching from political rights of women to issues of marriage including consent, minimum age and nationality. (Boutros-Ghali 1996; West 1999). In 1967, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly, which had earlier invited the CSW to provide a draft that would “combine in a single instrument international standards articulating the equal rights of men and women“ (UN 2010), however not being a binding treaty. In 1975, the International Women’s Year, the first UN women’s conference took place in Mexico City, where governments agreed on a global policy to end discrimination against women in the Mexico City World Plan of Action (UN 2010; Chen 1995; West 1999) as well as focusing on the women’s legal rights and economic disadvantages (Jaquette and Staudt 1995).

As probably “the most notable development“ (West 1999: 180) following the first UN women’s conference, the CSW started working on the Convention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, followed by the ratification of States which made the Convention enter into force in 1981 (UN 2010). As the former US ambassador to

the UN commission on the Status of Women Arvonne S. Fraser puts it: “Never before had discrimination on the grounds of sex been defined internationally and equality between women and men sanctioned in all areas of life and work.” (Fraser 1995: 77). The Secretary General of the United Nations at that time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, calls CEDAW the “international bill of human rights for women” (Boutros-Ghali 1996: 5).

The period 1976 - 1985 was declared the UN Decade for Women, taking as a midpoint the second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980, which was conflictive and “highly politicized” (Jaquette and Staudt 1995: 22), as the official agenda was overlapped by several controversial discourses. (West 1995: 180). The debate was permeated by various conflicts as delegates attended the conference with a “bloc perspective on women’s issues” (Jaquette 1995: 48), leading to a confrontation between West/East and North/South about topics such as Zionism, apartheid and the new economic order (Chen 1995; Jaquette 1995).

#### **4.1.1. 1985: Nairobi 15. - 26. July**

The End of the Decade was marked by the third Women’s conference in Nairobi, where the official conference included 1900 official delegates and the parallel NGO forum more than 14.000 NGO representatives (Patton 1995). Especially remarkable was the record high in attendants at the latter, where, for example, the Southern network Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), which had been founded shortly before the conference, actively participated (Chen 1995; Catagay et al. 1996; West 1999). In order to contextualize the Nairobi Declaration a closer look should be taken on the various steps of its creation: Who was involved and how was the text elaborated? The Nairobi Conference was developed in several meetings by the CSW, which was authorized by the General Assembly to be the preparatory committee (Boutros-Ghali 1996). Based on a questionnaire for governments, the discussions in the committee as well as other UN sources, the Branch for the Advancement of Women in the Vienna UN Center for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, developed a first draft for the Forward Looking Strategies in December 1984 (Patton 1996; Fraser 1987). This draft was negotiated in political blocs: the Western European and Others (WEO), the G-77 and the Eastern Socialist States (ESS), however, could not come to an agreement at first. One big discussion point was a particular formulation in which Zionism and racism were mentioned as equals. The Philippine diplomat Rosario Manalo then developed a negotiation procedure, where the blocs discussed paragraph by paragraph and linked the topics

equality, development and peace more specifically with women's rights. The document was finally ready for Nairobi, however about 20 percent of the text remained controversial (Patton 1996).

The mode of decision-making was – after long negotiations – decided to be consensual, which was a big concern of the US-delegation in order to avoid a 'politicized' conference as had occurred five years earlier in Copenhagen (Boutros-Ghali 1996; Patton 1996).

Finally, the document was divided and discussed in two Committees: Committee One, chaired by Colombia's Minister of Agriculture Cecilia Lopez, focused on equality, development and peace and selections from the "Areas of Special Concern". The PrepCom chair Rosario Manolo presided the more technical Committee Two. The political scientist and professor at the City University of New York, Charlottes G. Patton, describes the impact on the text generated by the different negotiation style and issues as follows:

"If Committee One was the public sense of ,high politics,' then the language of FLS (the Forward Looking Strategies, ann. KK), where G-77 pushed its perspective, reflected their negotiating attitudes. Western delegations fought to prevent the acceptance of any new formulae on systemic issues, such as sanctions against South Africa or the global economic crisis, which could later be incorporated as acceptable policy compromises into other UN documents (...). By contrast, Committee Two's paragraphs emerged as more conciliatory, more feminist language; its participants were less burdened with ,high politics' language." (Patton 1996: 72)

The main controversial points were – as in Copenhagen – paragraphs that

- demanded sanctions against South Africa and fiercely criticized apartheid
  - spoke in favour of an independent Palestinian state and against Israeli settlements (and equated Zionism with racism)
  - blamed industrial countries for not willing to change the economic order
  - called sanctions like blockades and economic measures violations of the UN Charter.
- (Catagay et al. 1996; Patton 1996)

After the plenary debate and the voting on four paragraphs were finished, the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies were finally approved by consensus (Boutros-Ghali 1996).



#### **4.1.2. 1995: Beijing 4. - 15. September**

The NGO forum was attended by over 30.000 women (which is twice as many as in Nairobi) and 189 governments sent their delegates to the formal Beijing conference. About 1500 organisations were approved for accreditation by the UN, ruling out, for example, religious organisation with focus on the family and not on women's issues (Timothy 2004). In fear of international protests in consequence of the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, the Chinese government constrained the NGO forum and made it difficult to attend (West 1999). Furthermore, for the first time a UN women's conference was confronted with an organized opposition from conservative movements and religious dominated institutions and states. The sociologist Lois A. West, professor at the Florida International University, points out three developments which built the framework for the conference's politics:

“ (1) the recognition in reports by the United Nations that women's global status was not improving significantly; (2) the introduction into diverse UN conferences of a women's agenda, effectively mainstreaming what had been ,women's issues'; and (3) the proliferation of feminist NGOs and the rise of new communications technologies (e-mail, the World Wide Web), leading to the globalization of women's networks“ (West 1999:183)

As ten years earlier, the CSW served as the preparatory body for the conference. The text for the Platform for Action was drafted by the Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women, located in the Division for the Advancement of Women in New York (Boutros-Ghali 1996, Riddell-Dixon 2001). In five regional preparatory meetings, each either coincided with or preceded by NGO meetings, the conference was planned and the draft discussed. Shortly before the conference, the CSW finished the negotiations on the draft where about 30 percent of the proposed actions were in dispute, including issues on the definition of gender or sexual and reproductive rights (with the result of the term 'sexual rights' being excluded from the document as a whole (Boutros-Ghali, 1996, Bunch and Fried 1996)). Concerning the controversy about feminism and gender roles, the term 'gender' was especially criticized by the Vatican and a few other states for not being sufficiently connected to the so-called natural biological sex roles (Bunch and Fried 1996). The end of the Cold War brought new challenges and constellations to the different interest groups at the Conference, other than the North/South or East/West conflicts that had shaped the previous conferences (Riddell-Dixon 2001).

The 468 bracketed passages were intensely discussed in the conference's 12 days. Especially the debate about the role of culture, religion and family showed differences, where compromises were to be found in informal consultations. Finally the delegates agreed on a consensus document and the attending governments unanimously adopted the Beijing Declaration (Boutros-Ghali 1996).

#### **4.2. Surface of the text**

Both documents are structured in chapters and paragraphs without a special layout. What seems very notable to contextualize the documents is the fact, that they are consensus-based. Due to the lowest common denominator "weak language may emerge from the most contentious and passionate debates" (Bunch and Fried 1996: 2001). Also, the multitude of interests and special wishes evoke the pieced together, partly redundant character of the Declarations, enforced by the multifaceted language applied. The inhomogenous character of the documents also lead to the effect, that the authors disappear behind the text and are not comprehensible.

#### **4.3. Nairobi: Rhetorical means: Topics**

*In a first step, in order to get an overview of the various addressed fields in the documents, they are summarized in general topics. The summary is a result of a twofold process: As a basic approach to the document, all nouns were counted and listed, providing an insight into the text's direction. On the other hand, the document was screened repeatedly for fundamental topics and concepts. The frequency of occurrence offers a first impression of the significance, the corpus attaches to various topics.*

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Agriculture/Land	32
Crime	3
Culture	19
Debt	6
Development	166
Disability	7
Economy	144
Education	106

Employment	117
Environment	10
Equality	115
Family	40
Health	65
Household/Family responsibilities	21
Hunger	14
Legislation	63
Marriage	12
Migration	13
Parenthood/Children	86
Peace/War	117
Politics/Decision-making	84
Population	11
Poverty	23
Prostitution/Trafficking	6
Science	44
Technology	35
Urbanization	3
Violence	17
Water	10

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Table 3: Frequency of topics in the Nairobi Declaration

#### **4.3.1. Three goals of the decade: development, equality, peace**

Development: Being the most frequently addressed topic in the document, development occurs in a variety of settings and with many intertwinings to other subject areas. The document considers development as a “comprehensive process” that “must be characterized by the search for economic and social objectives and goals that guarantee the effective participation of the entire population, especially women (...)”<sup>3</sup>. “Certain developed states”<sup>4</sup> are considered to restrain and handicap the ambitions of the ‘developing countries’ by using protectionism toward their own economies,

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<sup>3</sup> Nairobi 109

<sup>4</sup> Nairobi 94

keeping them in dependency and burdening them with the main adjustment for the economic crises<sup>5</sup> of the early 1980ies. Additionally, the huge costs for arms race and war, which are regarded as massive resource-wastage, are considered a main obstacle for development, of which particularly women suffer<sup>6</sup>. In general, women's role in development is considered to be troubled: They are impeded by traditional gender roles as well as by the low priority their issue is given, leading to "(i)nsufficient awareness and understanding of the complex and multifaceted relationships between development and advancement of women"<sup>7</sup>. Unfortunately this so-called complex relationship is not further explained. Attention is also paid to avoiding illegitimate generalizations:

"Although throughout history and in many societies women have been sharing similar experiences, in the developing countries the problems of women, particularly those pertaining to their integration in the development process, are different from the problems women face in the industrialized countries and are often a matter of survival."<sup>8</sup>

Whether this recognition is limited to mere lip service or is integrated into the ideas, strategies and measures suggested by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies as a whole, is to be further analyzed in this paper. What strikes me as particularly interesting though, is the continuation of the notion:

"Failure to recognize these differences leads, inter alia, to neglect the adverse effect of the insufficient progress made towards improvement in national policies or programmes and the present international economic situation as well as the interrelationships that exist between the goals (...) of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade and the objectives of equality, development and peace."<sup>9</sup>

This sentence turns out to be quite a challenge for interpretation. First and foremost, its content is not easily understandable. Put in other words, the sentence means: If the differences between women are not considered, three aspects are not given enough attention: the negative consequences of insufficiently changing national programmes, the international economic situation and the correlation between various development goals. Several questions arise from this point: (1) Which

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<sup>5</sup> Nairobi 96

<sup>6</sup> Nairobi 95

<sup>7</sup> Nairobi 103

<sup>8</sup> Nairobi 104

<sup>9</sup> Nairobi 104

negative consequences and which correlation are they talking of? (2) How is the connection between a differentiation in the category ‘woman’ and the recognition of failed/insufficient improvements in national or international policies? (3) How is the connection between a differentiation in the category ‘woman’ and the recognition of interrelationships between various development goals? This sentence could indicate that the writers themselves were not so sure about what to say and try to hide this fact behind the complexity and intricacy of the language. To carry the critique one step further, one could assume that the document is not quite certain in how the acknowledgment of the differences between women (as an analyzing tool) helps the creation of strategies and measures towards a sustainable development.

Generally, the topics gender and development are used in connection with economy and work possibilities, as well as political representation, decision-making and power. As areas for specific action the document points out employment, health, education, food, water and agriculture as well as industry. First and foremost, development is usually intertwined with the other two main decade goals: equality and peace. Apart from those mostly rhetorical enumerations, the topic intersects most dominantly with economy, politics and education. The notion that “(d)evlopment also requires a moral dimension to ensure that it is just and responsive to the needs and right of the individual”<sup>10</sup> seems to be worth mentioning.

Equality: Without further explanation the international economic order is regarded as the main fundamental obstacle for implementing equal rights for women worldwide. The inequality of women in most countries is primarily linked to the unjust distribution of international profits and the resulting economic, social and structural imbalances. The word choice seems particularly interesting in this context:

“The inequality of women (...) stems to a very large extent from mass poverty and the general backwardness of the majority of the world’s population caused by underdevelopment, which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, racism, racial discrimination and of unjust international relations.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Nairobi 12

<sup>11</sup> Nairobi 44

From today's view the sentence combines two quite contradictory paradigms, both on a language level as well as regards to content: The terms 'general backwardness' and 'underdevelopment' are discursive elements of the modernization theory, while the identified origins for them (imperialism, unjust international relations, etc.) are clearly situated in a dependency perspective. This could be explained by the hegemonial status that modernizational approaches held, affecting the mainstream discourse and overall the language of developmental issues in a sustainable way. However, the notion of a population's backwardness (often related to the religious beliefs or cultural traditions) as an impeding factor for development and prosperity remains one of the most criticized assumptions of the modernization theory. Therefore, its use in this context is both interesting and significant for the question of the mainstream discourse position in charge / in power.

In the document, the second source for discriminatory practices against women is a "deeply rooted resistance (...) of conservative elements in society" to a "change in attitude"<sup>12</sup> necessary for their total ban. It is emphasized that there is no physiological basis for discrimination (with special focus on the devaluation of domestic work) and the belief "perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality."<sup>13</sup>

In order to overcome women's "secondary status"<sup>14</sup>, the sharing of power on equal terms with men, including the access to education, economy and social & political participation, is regarded as a major strategy. It is again stressed that "the sharing of domestic responsibilities (...) and equal recognition of women's informal and invisible economic contributions in mainstream of society" should be of great importance. The focus on domestic and care work appears as recurrent theme throughout the whole equality issue.

Peace/War: This topic is largely influenced by two major historic situations – the Cold War and the apartheid-system in South Africa. The international arms race, especially in the nuclear field, is regarded as a waste of resources that lack in the budget for development efforts. In parts of the document the language seems very drastic: "Mankind is confronted with a choice. To halt the arms race (...) or face annihilation."<sup>15</sup>. War, armed conflicts and different forms of external domination as main obstacles to human progress are "reinforced by historically established hostile attitudes,

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<sup>12</sup> Nairobi 50

<sup>13</sup> Nairobi 45

<sup>14</sup> Nairobi 59

<sup>15</sup> Nairobi 254

ignorance and bigotry (...) and by lack of tolerance and respect for different cultures and traditions.”<sup>16</sup> And the connection to the economic system, which reoccurs throughout the whole Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, is made as “(t)here exists a relationship between the world economic situation, development and the strengthening of international peace and security, disarmament and the relaxation of international tension.”<sup>17</sup>

According to the text, women play an essential part in the struggle for “safeguarding world peace and averting a nuclear catastrophe”<sup>18</sup>, especially because they are assumed to take a special interest in this topic (On which basis? Which common ground? Their sex?):

“It is evident, that women all over the world have manifested their love for peace and their wish to play a greater role in international co-operation, amity and peace among different nations.”<sup>19</sup>

The use of the term ‘love’, which occurs only once in the whole document, is quite remarkable. Whether this can be discursively retraced to the peace-movement in the 1970ies is a matter of speculation. However, what seems relevant is the implicit connotation from a gender perspective: The connection of women and emotionality, structured on the dichotomic axis of the rational male (culture) and the emotional female (nature), is perfectly expressed by the phrase ‘love for peace’, especially regarding the context of the paper and its otherwise rather sober language.

The Nairobi Declaration draws a connection between gender-relations and peace:

“The questions of women and peace and the meaning of peace for women cannot be separated from the broader question of relationships between women and men in all spheres of life and in the family.”

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*Those three goals of the Decade are connected to the three sub-themes employment, health and education, constituting “the concrete basis on which equality, development and peace rest.”*<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nairobi 233

<sup>17</sup> Nairobi 252

<sup>18</sup> Nairobi 250

<sup>19</sup> Nairobi 237

<sup>20</sup> Nairobi 257

<sup>21</sup> Nairobi 15

#### **4.3.2. Three sub-themes: employment, health and education**

Employment: Regarding women's participation in the labour market, a broad range of special areas are taken into concern. On the level of gender roles the equal sharing of parental and domestic responsibilities is regarded an important precondition for increasing the percentage of working women. Furthermore governments are urged to encourage full participations of women "especially in fields perviously regarded as male preserves, in order to break down occupational barriers and taboos."<sup>22</sup> The document recommends "special measures designed to redress the imbalance imposed by centuries"<sup>23</sup>.

Concerning discrimination AT work, the document focusses on topics like the massive gender wage gap, sexual harassment and exploitation in specific jobs or social security and maternity protections. Mainstreaming unemployment measures is essential, as "by their nature they are often of greater assistance to men than to women."<sup>24</sup>

Health: The referred role of women is twofold: On the one hand, they are regarded as "health providers and health brokers for the family and community"<sup>25</sup>, on the other hand, their responsibility for "bearing and rearing children"<sup>26</sup> is mentioned. In this context particular attention is paid to fertility control and qualitative drugs as "(t)he ability of women to control their own fertility forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights"<sup>27</sup>, which are not further explained. Additionally, women should have both access to and control over the family income "to provide adequate nutrition for themselves and their children".<sup>28</sup> By using these ascriptions, the writers of the document thread a fine line between describing the actualities of women's responsibilities and living conditions and otherwise solidifying gender stereotypes of women as reproductive, nourishing caretakers.

Although health care "should be free of commercial pressure"<sup>29</sup>, it is not referred to as state-provided.

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<sup>22</sup> Nairobi 84

<sup>23</sup> Nairobi 84

<sup>24</sup> Nairobi 145

<sup>25</sup> Nairobi 148

<sup>26</sup> Nairobi 148

<sup>27</sup> Nairobi 156

<sup>28</sup> Nairobi 154

<sup>29</sup> Nairobi 151



Education: Education occurs as a fundamental precondition for the improvement of women's status around the globe, so equal access for both women and men is requested. Regarding gender stereotyping the document suggests the examination of curricula and textbooks as well as awareness raising among educational personnel. Ironically, however, the text itself is permeated with more or less subtle presuppositions about gender roles. For example, great importance is attached to struggle illiteracy, though with a mainly functional approach. Literacy should be promoted "with special emphasis on health, nutrition and viable economic skills and opportunities, in order to eradicate illiteracy among women"<sup>30</sup>. This particular perspective on educating women according to their classical gender role with all its associated responsibilities (in this case the nourishing caretaker) appears again at another point of the document, explaining the fundamental imperative for educational efforts: "Raising the level of education among women is important for the general welfare of society and because of the close link to child survival and child spacing."<sup>31</sup> This very argument connects the benefits of women's education for their (social) environment with their traditional gender role as mothers. Education of women is not an aim as such without a further purpose aside from empowerment, but it is instrumentalized for society as a whole and child-rearing in particular. The latter is, moreover, clearly attributed to women exclusively. However, the need for educating men in terms of domestic and parental duties is mentioned at the end of the passage to education: "Educational programmes to enable men to assume as much responsibility as women in the upbringing of children and the maintenance of the household should be introduced at all levels of the educational system."<sup>32</sup>

#### **4.3.3. Other topics**

Poverty: This topic, although being referred to as a major obstacle to the advancement of women<sup>33</sup>, is not examined specifically but rather addressed cross sectionally throughout the document (except for a small paragraph on so-called destitute women in "areas of specific concern"). The connection drawn between the status of women and poverty reduction measures is also worth mentioning:

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<sup>30</sup> Nairobi 164

<sup>31</sup> Nairobi 164

<sup>32</sup> Nairobi 172

<sup>33</sup> Nairobi 19

“The exigencies created by the problems of mass poverty, compounded by scarce national resources, have compelled Governments to concentrate on alleviating the poverty of both women and men rather than on equality issues for women. At the same time, because women’s secondary position increases their vulnerability to marginalization, those belonging to the lowest socio-economic strata are likely to be the poorest of the poor and should be given priority.”<sup>34</sup>

By acknowledging the fact that gender equality issues need to be addressed deliberately in measures supposed to aim at common benefits, this notion is founded on the basic principles of gender mainstreaming, a concept proposed at the Beijing conference ten years later.

Environment: Mentioned only 12 times in the whole Nairobi Declaration, environmental issues are not exactly on top of the priority list. Women are described as “intermediaries between the natural environment and society”<sup>35</sup>, a not very subtle classical gender attribution of nurturing female and nature. Otherwise, environmental issues are mainly addressed in combination with natural catastrophes such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, desertification etc. and connected to structural or systematic changes: “We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent”<sup>36</sup>. Relevant environmental issues from today’s perspective such as global warming, ozon-hole or renewable energy are not subject matter.

Population: The emphasis is on women’s right to birth control, leading to a “better regulation of fertility and hence of population growth, which would be beneficial for the environment and, ultimately, for women, children and men”<sup>37</sup>. Apparently fertility control is not foremost regarded as a personal matter, leading to an improvement in women’s living conditions and therefore to a more self-determined life, but is of greater benefit. The emphasis is on the general gain for society. Other than that, population issues are very rarely mentioned, mainly with a negative connotation in terms as “demographic pressure”<sup>38</sup> in connection with food supply.

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<sup>34</sup> Nairobi 19

<sup>35</sup> Nairobi 28

<sup>36</sup> Nairobi 36

<sup>37</sup> Nairobi 28

<sup>38</sup> Nairobi 177

Culture: Apart from short occurrences in general listings such as “political, economic, social and cultural development”<sup>39</sup>, culture is used inter alia in connection with potential threats to the improvement of women’s status, however without further explanation: “Different socio-economic and cultural conditions are to be taken into account when identifying the foremost obstacles to the advancement of women.”<sup>40</sup> Again, traces of the modernizational approach to cultural factors as impediments for societal progress could be detected here, although elsewhere the document emphasizes the need for “tolerance and respect for different cultures and traditions”<sup>41</sup> as well as that the “loss of cultural values (...) should be avoided”<sup>42</sup>. Regarding indigenous and traditional cultures the “distinctive role of women in sustaining the identity of their people”<sup>43</sup> is stressed. In this context it seems particularly interesting that women are attributed a unique standpoint in this cultural process and which alleged qualities legitimate that. Aside from that, the low priority of cultural issues is reflected in the infrequent use of the term as well as in the lack of a profound engagement with the concept.

Migration: The increasing involvement of women in various forms of migration in the 1980ies is reflected in a short chapter concerning migrant women. Their multiple challenges are described as follows:

“In addition to their lack of adequate education, skills and resources, migrant women may also face severe adjustment problems due to differences in religion, language, nationality, and socialization as well as separation from their original families.”<sup>44</sup>

This formulation indicates the basic assumption of migrant women being generally uneducated and does not exactly represent a highlight in differentiation. Their situation is regarded as especially difficult due to the fact that they are “subject to double discrimination as women and as migrants”<sup>45</sup>. The writers therefore seem to believe that the convergence of two discrimination categories leads to

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<sup>39</sup> Nairobi 11

<sup>40</sup> Nairobi 108

<sup>41</sup> Nairobi 233

<sup>42</sup> Nairobi 301

<sup>43</sup> Nairobi 204

<sup>44</sup> Nairobi 300

<sup>45</sup> Nairobi 301

a double burden of discrimination, a notion clearly opposed to today's intersectionality approach (Hancock 2007, Winker and Degele 2009). In order to improve the situation, the document suggests education as the essential key to a successful integration.

Agriculture: Again, gender mainstreaming issues are addressed as “(a)grarian reform measures have not always ensured women’s rights even in countries where women predominate in the agricultural labour force”<sup>46</sup>. Especially the control over access to land, means of production as well as the products and results of their labour should be guaranteed for women as “key food producers”<sup>47</sup>. Of special concern seems to be the implementation of fair and equal inheritance laws, so that women can gain access to land ownership and the registration of land titles. So called “modern technology programmes”<sup>48</sup> are supposed to improve the effectiveness of local agricultural production with the distinctive contribution of women, supporting them inter alia with technical training. Environmental issues and the question of sustainability are addressed as follows: “The excessive and inappropriate exploitation of land by any part for any purpose, inter alia, by transnational corporations, as well as (...) disasters”<sup>49</sup> are responsible for the deprivation of “traditional means of livelihood”<sup>50</sup>.

Disability: Being reduced to the compact chapter “Women with physical and mental disabilities” in “areas of special concern“, disability is not a cross-sectional matter in the document. The double burden for women is described as follows: “The recognition of their (*disabled persons, ann. KK*) human dignity and human rights and the full participation (...) in society is still limited, and this presents additional problems for women who may have domestic and other responsibilities.”<sup>51</sup> The writers recommend rehabilitation measures, support services as well as participation opportunities without going into details.

Science/Research: This topic is composed of two strands: On the one, hand science and research are regarded as important foundations for the successful development of strategies and measures. The document repeatedly suggests more effort in gathering statistics and studies as well as collecting

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<sup>46</sup> Nairobi 62

<sup>47</sup> Nairobi 174

<sup>48</sup> Nairobi 183

<sup>49</sup> Nairobi 292

<sup>50</sup> Nairobi 292

<sup>51</sup> Nairobi 296

data on a regular basis. The promotion of research activities is not only recommended to countries but to the United Nations themselves. On the other hand, women's participation is of an essential concern, which should be ensured by both the encouragement for girls to study scientific subjects and women's equal access to modern science and education. A special interest is taken in the further development of women's studies and their institutional application in order "to reformulate the current models influencing the constitution of knowledge and sustaining a value system that reinforces inequality"<sup>52</sup>, emphasizing the critical and political claim of women's studies to engage in epistemological questions of knowledge production.

Hunger: Being a cross-sectional matter, hunger is mentioned in short terms throughout the document, mostly as part of a general listing (e.g. "including war and other forms of violence, poverty, hunger, nutritional deficiencies, epidemics and work-related accidents"<sup>53</sup>). As a topic of its own, hunger is addressed mainly in connection with the African continent, urging particularly donor countries to increase financial assistance and to provide training in food technologies. Women and children (in this very combination) are repeatedly identified as the group being particularly exposed to famine and malnutrition.

Debt: Debt is regarded as a serious impediment and a heavy burden for the sustainable and independent development of certain countries with particular effects on women. In the document, the conditions for the payment and servicing of the external debt are criticized, which "cause those countries enormous difficulties"<sup>54</sup>. Moreover, the "adjustment policies traditionally imposed are inadequate and lead to a disproportionate social cost."<sup>55</sup>.

Politics/Decision-making: The topic consists of a variety of different applications. First of all, it generally reoccurs in combination with economic and social concerns in the description of certain

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<sup>52</sup> Nairobi 168

<sup>53</sup> Nairobi 296

<sup>54</sup> Nairobi 100

<sup>55</sup> Nairobi 100

areas such as: “political, economic and social liberation”<sup>56</sup>, “political, economic, social and cultural development”<sup>57</sup>, “political, economic and social life”<sup>58</sup> and so forth.

The second strand focusses on the decision-making process, where the unequal distribution of power comes into play. In phrases like “The lack of political will and commitment continued to retard action to promote effective participation by women in development.”<sup>59</sup> or “What is now needed is the political will to promote development”<sup>60</sup>, the specific notion of politics as a battlefield of different interest groups is addressed, while the stakeholders are not directly mentioned.

Last but not least, issues of representation and participation especially regarding gender permeate the whole document. The “(e)xclusion of women from policy-making”<sup>61</sup> requires immediate measures to ensure women’s right to “take part in national and international decision-making processes”<sup>62</sup>, “the opportunity to represent their Government at all levels on delegations”<sup>63</sup> and the necessity of women being appointed “as diplomats and to decision-making posts”<sup>64</sup>. In this context, the concept of solidarity and support is regarded as basic precondition:

“Success will depend in large measure upon whether or not women can unite to help each other to change their poor material circumstances and secondary status and to obtain the time, energy and experience required to participate in political life.”<sup>65</sup>

The particular importance attached to women’s participation in decision-making processes is also reflected in a chapter where the United Nations system is under scrutiny in terms of an equal distribution of power in policy-making.

Water: The provision of safe water is addressed in connection with environmental as well as health issues, both with the emphasis on women’s special role. On the one hand, governments should focus

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<sup>56</sup> Nairobi 1

<sup>57</sup> Nairobi 11

<sup>58</sup> Nairobi 13

<sup>59</sup> Nairobi 105

<sup>60</sup> Nairobi 21

<sup>61</sup> Nairobi 105

<sup>62</sup> Nairobi 32

<sup>63</sup> Nairobi 79

<sup>64</sup> Nairobi 79

<sup>65</sup> Nairobi 33

on special measures to “relieve the burden placed on women by the task of fetching water“<sup>66</sup>, on the other hand, they are urged to ensure “that women are consulted and involved in the planning and implementation of water and sanitation projects“<sup>67</sup>.

Technology: First and foremost, technology is largely represented in context of food production. Rotation of crops, mixed farming, intercropping systems, fertility techniques and other food-processing technologies are stressed to be crucial especially to women in their role as food providers. Other than that, technical cooperation among “developing countries“<sup>68</sup> is urged repeatedly in the document, while the gender bias in this particular context is taken into account:

“While technical co-operation should be focused equally on women and men, the incorporation of women’s needs and aspirations in the formulation and review of technical co-operation policies and programmes should be ensured and the potential negative effects on women of technical assistance should be minimized.“<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, the participation of women on all levels is stressed, inter alia, enabled by encouraging them to study and engage in technological fields.

As already mentioned further above, the document claims a “moral dimension“<sup>70</sup> to development, especially so “that science and technology are applied within a social and economic framework that ensures environmental safety for all life forms on our planet.“<sup>71</sup>.

Urbanization: Although referred to as “one of the major socio-economic trends over the past few decades“<sup>72</sup>, urbanization is limited to two paragraphs in “(a)reas of special concern“. They vaguely recommend the provision of supportive services for urban women such as child-care facilities and point out the importance of considering the informal sector, especially for poor urban women.

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<sup>66</sup> Nairobi 188

<sup>67</sup> Nairobi 151

<sup>68</sup> Nairobi 310

<sup>69</sup> Nairobi 327

<sup>70</sup> Nairobi 12

<sup>71</sup> Nairobi 12

<sup>72</sup> Nairobi 284

Prostitution/Trafficking: The Nairobi Declaration exclusively deals with forced prostitution, intertwining this subject with trafficking. Although limited to only two paragraphs, a variety of discourse strands coincide in this topic's framework. Involuntary prostitution is characterized as "a form of slavery imposed on women by procurers"<sup>73</sup>, by which women are "victimized"<sup>74</sup>. Alongside sex tourism and pornography, it reduces women "to mere sex objects and marketable commodities."<sup>75</sup>

Basically, the phenomenon is explained as a result of "economic degradation that alienates women's labour through processes of rapid urbanization and migration"<sup>76</sup> leading to unemployment. Given the historic period, the term alienation indicates a Marxist perspective on the conditions of labour in general and the character of prostitution in particular. Following that lead the sentence implies that urbanization and migration are effects of the periphery's exploitation, basically rooted in the unjust economic world order. As a consequence, the sentence identifies Western colonialisational structures as one reason for forced prostitution. In a next step however, forced prostitution "also stems from women's dependence on men"<sup>77</sup> without further specification. As this statement is directly attached to the sentence discussed above, the writers seem to refer first and foremost to economic dependence. Economic dependence again is the centerpiece of Western feminisms' analysis of unequal gender relations and it is in its all-encompassing explanatory claim center of heavy critique. To cut a long story short, Western colonializational structures are both criticized and applied in these short paragraphs, which makes them a good example for the reoccurring inconsistencies in the whole document as well as particularly interesting for a discourse analysis. Finally, it seems also worth mentioning that the Nairobi Declaration targets at the "prevention of prostitution"<sup>78</sup> in the long run.

Crime: The topic focusses on women both as victims and as perpetrators. In the first case, special attention is given to violent crimes affecting women's bodies as well as sex-related crimes leading to women's "degradation"<sup>79</sup>. The importance of trained law enforcement to deal sensitively with the

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<sup>73</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>74</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>75</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>76</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>77</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>78</sup> Nairobi 291

<sup>79</sup> Nairobi 76



victims is emphasized. Regarding female delinquents, the major area of concern is the “need for equal treatment of women by the criminal justice system.”<sup>80</sup> This ranges from sexual harassment or physical violence in prison to the conditions of detention such as hygienic standards or the right to see their children. The high proportion of imprisoned indigenous women in some countries is particularly mentioned.

Legislation: The document regards legislation as one of the most effective instruments in the struggle for gender equality, which is mainly reflected in the frequent occurrence, mostly as a recommended measure or strategy. However, the “sharp contrasts between legislative changes and effective implementation”<sup>81</sup> are identified as a major problem, holding governments reliable not only to pay lip service.

Aside from application challenges, the Declaration addresses the problem of access and participation:

“The law as a recourse does not automatically benefit all women equally, owing to the socio-economic inequalities determining women’s knowledge of and access to the law, as well as their ability to exercise their full legal rights without fear of recrimination or intimidation.”<sup>82</sup>

The high level of differentiation among the otherwise rather generally applied category of women is remarkable at this point. Additionally new legislation should be put through a careful gender mainstreaming process to “ensure that it implies no direct or indirect discrimination.”<sup>83</sup> Legislative measures, however a “catalyst for societal change”<sup>84</sup>, are only regarded as one element, as they “are most effective when made within a supportive framework promoting simultaneous changes in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres”<sup>85</sup>.

Economy: Economy is, alongside development, the topic with the most occurrences in different contexts throughout the document, reflecting the outstanding importance as a category for analyzing

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<sup>80</sup> Nairobi 297

<sup>81</sup> Nairobi 47

<sup>82</sup> Nairobi 47

<sup>83</sup> Nairobi 49

<sup>84</sup> Nairobi 43

<sup>85</sup> Nairobi 51

global systems as well as power relations attached by the time's discourse. Basically, 'developing countries' suffer from the "dependent nature of their economies"<sup>86</sup>, an effect of the "structural imbalances"<sup>87</sup> of the economic situation. The "unjust distribution of the benefits of the international economy"<sup>88</sup> is amplified by

"protectionism against developing-countries' exports in all its forms, the deterioration of the terms of trade, monetary instability, including high interest rates and the inadequate flow of official development assistance."<sup>89</sup>

This characterization of the international economic order can be situated in both the dependence paradigm and the world system theory. Also, the document argues with the Prebisch-Singer thesis, which asserts the deterioration of terms of trade between primary products such as commodities and manufactured products. Besides, "the main burden of adjustment to the economic crises has been borne by the developing countries, pushing the majority of them toward economic collapse"<sup>90</sup>, inter alia "because of their generally greater vulnerability to external economic factors"<sup>91</sup>. In sum, the Nairobi Declaration aims at the establishment of a new economic paradigm founded on "equity, sovereign equality, interdependence and common interest"<sup>92</sup>, as

"(t)here exists a relationship between the world economic situation, development and the strengthening of international peace and security, disarmament and the relaxation of international tension."<sup>93</sup>

Women are considered as an "essential productive force in all economies"<sup>94</sup>, their status should be intensified and their full participation in and access to economic processes secured. This also implies

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<sup>86</sup> Nairobi 189

<sup>87</sup> Nairobi 23

<sup>88</sup> Nairobi 43

<sup>89</sup> Nairobi 100

<sup>90</sup> Nairobi 96

<sup>91</sup> Nairobi 96

<sup>92</sup> Nairobi 8

<sup>93</sup> Nairobi 252

<sup>94</sup> Nairobi 19

an “equal recognition of women’s informal and invisible economic contributions”<sup>95</sup>, meaning domestic responsibilities and unpaid care work.

Violence: The topic is discussed on two major levels: On the one hand, various forms of violence against women are condemned such as rape, beating, torture, sexual exploitation, with a special emphasis on domestic violence. On an analytical level, certain historical situations such as the oppressive apartheid system and the particular vulnerable life conditions of the Palestinian people are described as a productive ground for violence against women. The latter is regarded as a “societal problem”<sup>96</sup> requiring, inter alia, the elimination of “degrading images and representations of women in society.”<sup>97</sup>

Household/Family responsibilities: Women’s double burden of work, consisting of domestic tasks and the participation in the labour force, and the unjust distribution of family responsibilities is explained with the remaining stereotypisation of reproductive work:

“Although there is no physiological basis for regarding the household and family as essentially the domain of women, for the devaluation of domestic work and for regarding the capacities of women as inferior to those of men, the belief that such a basis exists perpetuates inequality and inhibits the structural and attitudinal changes necessary to eliminate such inequality.”<sup>98</sup>

The Nairobi Declaration seems to suggest two basic strategies for the attitudinal change and the improvement of women’s situation. On the one hand, the status of domestic work needs to be enhanced “so that the value of housework is considered equivalent of financial contributions.”<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, an equal contribution to family responsibilities by men and women, supported by social infrastructure “that will enable society to share these responsibilities with families”<sup>100</sup> is urged in the document. As a precondition, women should be guaranteed an equal access to

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<sup>95</sup> Nairobi 59

<sup>96</sup> Nairobi 288

<sup>97</sup> Nairobi 288

<sup>98</sup> Nairobi 45

<sup>99</sup> Nairobi 73

<sup>100</sup> Nairobi 21

resources, credits, loans as well as the participation in decision-making regarding family issues, which also means that legal barriers confining the head of household to men need to be eliminated.

Parenthood/Children: The topic consists of several aspects: First, special attention is paid to the health of pregnant women (including adequate health care and the implementation of maternity leave), “bearing in mind the productive role of women in society and their responsibilities for bearing and rearing children.”<sup>101</sup> Second, the establishment of a system “of sharing parental responsibilities by women and men in the family”<sup>102</sup> is repeatedly emphasized, with a special focus on shared paternal leave, which should be available to both parents. Third, the document urges to eliminate any form of discrimination against single mothers and their children “(w)ithout prejudice to the religious and cultural traditions of countries.”<sup>103</sup> And last, the right to birth control and to the decision on family-planning is mentioned as “an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights.”<sup>104</sup>

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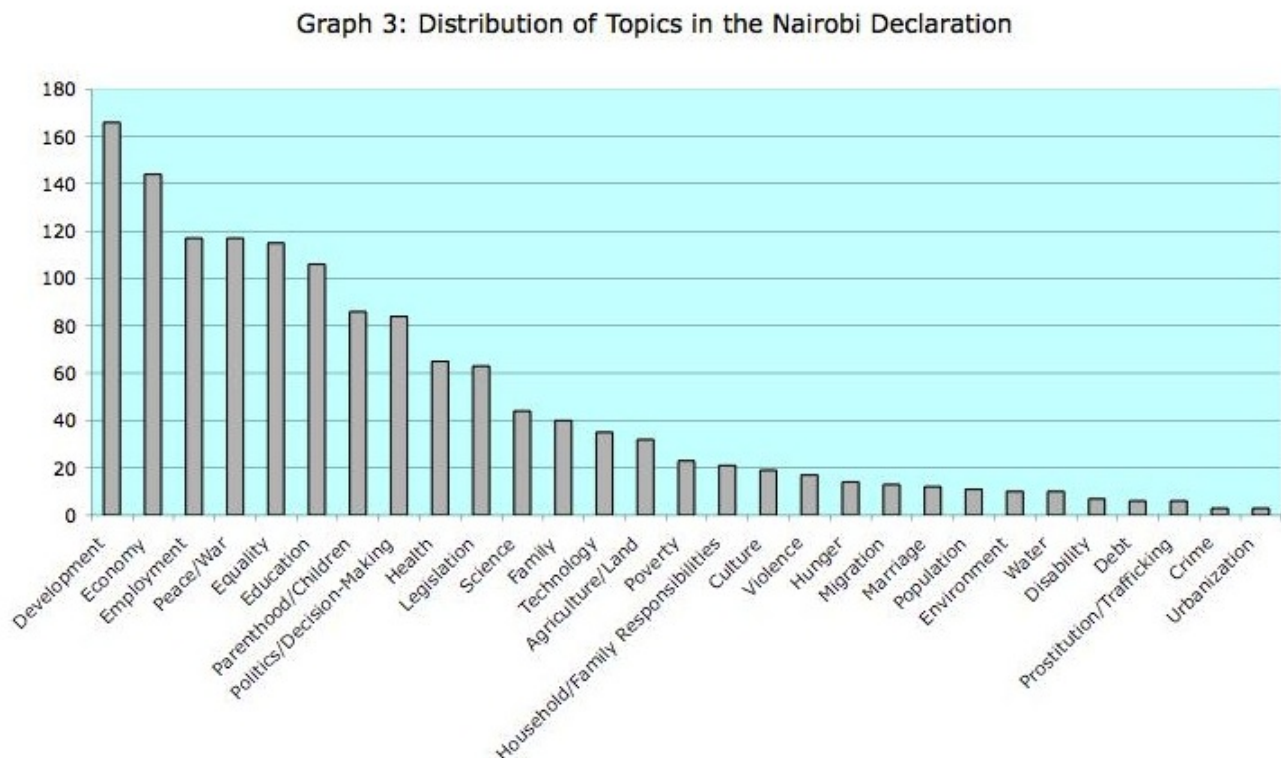
<sup>101</sup> Nairobi 148

<sup>102</sup> Nairobi 121

<sup>103</sup> Nairobi 74

<sup>104</sup> Nairobi 156

#### 4.3.4. Summary topics



The importance of the three main goals of the decade - development, equality and peace - as well as the three sub-themes employment, health and education is reflected in the frequency of occurrence. The graph also shows the huge dominance of economical issues and analysis in the Nairobi Declaration, being the second most frequently mentioned topic in the text. From today's perspective quite essential issues such as environment or social questions do not play an important role in the Declaration.

#### 4.4. Nairobi: Rhetorical means: Arguments

*In a next step, the argumentational strategies of the document are under scrutiny: Which arguments can be identified and when are they applied? In which thematical context do they appear? A closer look provides another puzzle piece of the character of the document.*

Maximizing benefits: Together with moral claim, maximizing benefits is one of the most frequent

arguments in the Nairobi Declaration. In general, the advancement of women is usually connected to a greater purpose, to societal benefits or a simultaneous improvement of family or community structures and rarely stands for itself:

“The need for women’s perspective on human development is critical since it is in the interest of human enrichment and progress to introduce and weave into the social fabric women’s concept of equality, their choices between alternative development strategies and their approach to peace, in accordance with their aspirations, interests and talents. These things are not only desirable in themselves, but are also essential for the attainment of the goals and objectives of the Decade.”<sup>105</sup>

There are two major strands: First, the document regards various already existing roles and responsibilities of women as important contributions to a larger benefit for different levels of society. Women are considered “an essential productive force in all economies”<sup>106</sup>, “a factor of development”<sup>107</sup>, “intermediaries between the natural environment and society”<sup>108</sup>, great contributors “to the welfare of families and the development of society”<sup>109</sup>, crucial in their “multiple roles as health providers and health brokers for family and community”<sup>110</sup> and important activists for “safeguarding world peace”<sup>111</sup>. In this context the document suggests that women’s particular “strengths and capabilities”<sup>112</sup> contribute to a public purpose. On the other hand, women’s participation on equal and fair terms with men in all areas of society must be promoted as important precondition for the society’s profit as a whole. Discrimination leads to

“(…) an uneconomic use of women’s talents and wastes the valuable human resources necessary for development and for the strengthening of peace. Ultimately, society is the loser if the talents of women are under-utilized as a result for discrimination.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Nairobi 16

<sup>106</sup> Nairobi 19

<sup>107</sup> Nairobi 117

<sup>108</sup> Nairobi 28

<sup>109</sup> Nairobi 15

<sup>110</sup> Nairobi 148

<sup>111</sup> Nairobi 250

<sup>112</sup> Nairobi 15

<sup>113</sup> Nairobi 47

This (strategic?) utilitarian argument connects the “optimum development of human and material resources”<sup>114</sup> with gender equality and appears in many variations throughout the document. In a particular text passage, the Nairobi Declaration even recommends its frequent use in order to legitimate and strengthen the claim for policies and measures specifically aimed at women:

“It is vital that the link between the advancement of women and socio-economic and political development be emphasized for the effective mobilization of resources for women.”<sup>115</sup>

Regarding environmental and demographic issues, for instance, this suggestion is seized as follows:

“In a general manner, an improvement in the situation of women could bring about a reduction in mortality and morbidity as well as better regulation of fertility and hence of population growth, which would be beneficial for the environment and, ultimately, for women, children and men.”<sup>116</sup>

Another example is the argumentation for a better access to and an improved level of education among women: It “is important for the general welfare of society and because of its close link to child survival and child spacing.”<sup>117</sup>

Assumption: While usually the consequences of given situations or problems are addressed as facts, the Nairobi Declaration also makes assumptions from time to time, both in a negative and a positive context. However, its use seems quite random and piecemeal: Elsewhere clearly stated as a fact, paragraph 23 suddenly assumes that women, “subject to compound discrimination (...) could be even more adversely affected by deteriorating economic conditions.”<sup>118</sup> Later in the document, the promotion of just and equitable growth “could make possible the attainment of the goals and objectives of the International Development Strategy”<sup>119</sup>, which in turn “could make a significant improvement in the status of women”.<sup>120</sup> Although the actual number of assumptions used in the document is quite small, the majority occurs at the beginning of the Nairobi Declaration.

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<sup>114</sup> Nairobi 15

<sup>115</sup> Nairobi 119

<sup>116</sup> Nairobi 28

<sup>117</sup> Nairobi 164

<sup>118</sup> Nairobi 23

<sup>119</sup> Nairobi 25

<sup>120</sup> Nairobi 25

Generalization: Generalizations occur frequently throughout the document, while especially the descriptions of ‘the situation of women’ are often full of them. Statements like “women all over the world have manifested their love for peace”<sup>121</sup> or, in another context, “the general backwardness of the majority of the world’s population”<sup>122</sup> reflect the lack of further differentiation that permeates major parts of the Nairobi Declaration.

Prediction: Predictions are usually made in a negative context with a non-favourable outcome to underscore the claim for change, as shown here:

“If widespread international tensions continue, with threats not only of nuclear catastrophe but also of localized conventional warfare, then the attention of policy-makers will be diverted from tasks directly and indirectly relevant to the advancement of women and men (...)”<sup>123</sup>

Statements like “numerous obstacles will continue to exist which retard the participation of women in political life”<sup>124</sup>, “poverty and landlessness among rural women will increase significantly”<sup>125</sup>, “changes in the natural environment will be critical for women”<sup>126</sup> or “the type of work available for the majority of women (...) will continue to be low”<sup>127</sup> emphasize the need to take action.

Moral claim: This argumentation strategy includes all statements with a self-contained moral or ethic claim and appears in every topical context. Usually the claims are based on the principle of equality and the human rights, respectively the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>128</sup>, and encompass various layers of society from the macroeconomic to the individual level. In general, development is supposed to bring about “sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and of society”<sup>129</sup> and requires

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<sup>121</sup> Nairobi 237

<sup>122</sup> Nairobi 44

<sup>123</sup> Nairobi 31

<sup>124</sup> Nairobi 33

<sup>125</sup> Nairobi 175

<sup>126</sup> Nairobi 28

<sup>127</sup> Nairobi 27

<sup>128</sup> The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948.

<sup>129</sup> Nairobi 110



“(...) a moral dimension to ensure that it is just and responsive to the needs and rights of the individual and that science and technology are applied within a social and economic framework that ensures environmental safety for all life forms on our planet.”<sup>130</sup>

For social cohesion, the Nairobi Declaration emphasizes the importance of “trust between nations, social groups and individuals”<sup>131</sup> as well as “goodwill toward others”<sup>132</sup>, “good-neighbourliness”<sup>133</sup> and “respect for life while protecting freedom, human rights and the dignity of peoples and of individuals”<sup>134</sup>. On a macroeconomic level, the document supports the establishment of “a New International Economic Order founded on equity, sovereign equality, interdependence and common interest”<sup>135</sup> which is “to the benefit of all people – women and men of all countries.”<sup>136</sup> The advancement of women is usually endorsed by both a moral claim based on equality and the maximization of benefits accompanying it.

The Nairobi Declaration also appeals to “all women and men in a spirit of solidarity”<sup>137</sup>, especially to those in powerful positions, to enhance “equality for all women, their full participation in development, and the advancement and strengthening of peace.”<sup>138</sup>

Description: Usually placed at the beginning of a new topic, compact descriptions of the current situation introduce the readers to the areas of concern. There are certain perspectives which reoccur repeatedly throughout the document. To cut a long story short, the analysis of the international situation can be summarized as follows: The Nairobi World Conference “is taking place at a critical moment for developing countries”<sup>139</sup> as they have been “particularly adversely affected”<sup>140</sup> by the international economic crises. This is also reflected in the gap between “developed and developing

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<sup>130</sup> Nairobi 12

<sup>131</sup> Nairobi 13

<sup>132</sup> Nairobi 13

<sup>133</sup> Nairobi 255

<sup>134</sup> Nairobi 13

<sup>135</sup> Nairobi 8

<sup>136</sup> Nairobi 26

<sup>137</sup> Nairobi 42

<sup>138</sup> Nairobi 42

<sup>139</sup> Nairobi 7

<sup>140</sup> Nairobi 8

countries“<sup>141</sup> which “instead of narrowing, is widening further“<sup>142</sup>, inter alia because of the increasing burden of external debts and unjust imbalances in the world economic system. To those economic difficulties, “with their attendant social and cultural implications“<sup>143</sup> the Nairobi Declaration adds “the threat to international peace and security.“<sup>144</sup> This complicated international situation especially disadvantages women and exacerbates their already unjust societal position caused by attitudinal, structural and economical discrimination.

Commendation: Commendations are both directly addressed to certain institutions, (mostly governments but also political parties and organizations as well as UN-related structures such as the Commission on the Status of Women), and left without a concrete receiver such as: “policies should be reoriented and reinforced to promote world trade“<sup>145</sup> or “(c)hanges in social and economic structures should be promoted.“<sup>146</sup> Certain suggestions are rather general, for example: “(t)he obstacles to the equality of women created by stereotypes, perceptions of and attitudes towards women should be totally removed“<sup>147</sup>, which should be accomplished by public education. Elsewhere the Nairobi Declaration is far more concrete, urging governments to sign the CEDAW “and other international instruments“<sup>148</sup> relating to the advancement of women and to consider “the possibility of establishing appropriate bodies charged with reviewing the national legislation.“<sup>149</sup>

Self-portrayal: Repeatedly throughout the document, there are self-portrayals of the United Nations and their broad net of related bodies and institutions that are considered crucial in the international struggle for women’s rights:

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<sup>141</sup> Nairobi 8

<sup>142</sup> Nairobi 8

<sup>143</sup> Nairobi 20

<sup>144</sup> Nairobi 20

<sup>145</sup> Nairobi 24

<sup>146</sup> Nairobi 52

<sup>147</sup> Nairobi 56

<sup>148</sup> Nairobi 134

<sup>149</sup> Nairobi 60

“The founding of the United Nations after the victory in the Second World War and the emergence of interdependent States following the decolonization were some of the important events in the political, economic and social liberation of women.”<sup>150</sup>

The Nairobi Declaration consequently refers to other UN documents such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights or the Declaration on the Participation of Women in Promoting International Peace and Co-operation. As important points of references, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the World Health Organization or the International Labour Organization are mentioned.

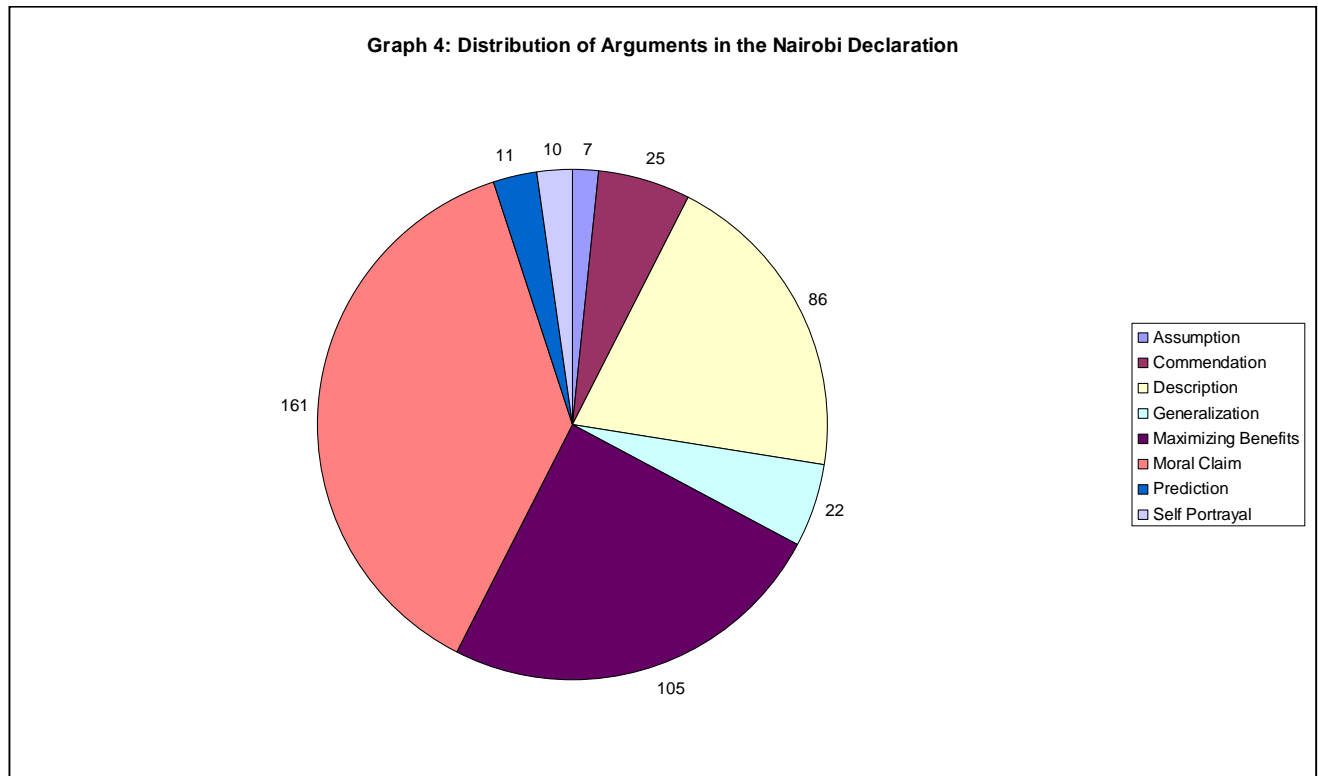
“The United Nations systems, particularly the commission on the Status of Women, has worked for four decades to establish international standards and to identify and propose measures to prevent discrimination on the basis of sex.”<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Nairobi 1

<sup>151</sup> Nairobi 43

#### 4.4.1. Summary arguments



The most frequent argumentational strategies are moral claim and the maximization of benefits, followed by commendations and the description of situations and the status quo. Particularly interesting seems the fact, that the first two arguments are often combined: so does moral claim rarely stand alone without being backed up by a greater benefit. Self-portrayal, generalization, assumption and prediction only play an insignificant role in the document.

#### 4.5. Nairobi: Ideological means

*In a final step both the implicit and explicit ideological concepts of the document are under scrutiny, focusing in particular on the statements related to concerns of postcolonial feminist critique.*

*A specific analysis of the text in matters of the two foundations of postcolonial feminist critique mentioned above sheds light on the ideological assumptions and premises the Declaration is built upon.*

<b>Gender Relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the assumption of a universal patriarchy, affecting women all over the world in the same way</li> </ul>
Which assumptions about the connection and power relations are made from a gender perspective? How are gender arrangements/relations described and considered?	
<b>Differentiation &amp; Generalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women worldwide are a coherent group, connected through their gender</li> <li>• Lack of consideration of categories such as race, class, nation</li> <li>• Third World women as monolithic subject</li> </ul>
How does the document deal with structural categories? Is there systematical differentiation? Do categories such as race, class, religion play a role in the documents?	

Graph 5: Postcolonial critique and ideological questions

#### 4.5.1. Gender relations

In order to provide an extensive picture of the gender relations in the Nairobi Declaration, a theoretical background for an analyzing frame seems beneficial. The German sociologists Gabriele Winker and Nina Degele (2009) develop their theoretical and methodological approach to intersectionality on the grounds of different, yet interconnected fields of analysis.

They identify three levels in which gender is produced in different ways: Social structures including organizations and institutions (macro- and mesolevel), the formation of identity (microlevel) as well as the symbolic and cultural symbolism (on the level of representation). These distinctive fields, located on the level of structure, agency and discourse, provide a very adaptable concept and thus serve as my analytical framework for examining the various statements regarding gender relations in the corpus.

Level	Field of Interest	Special Focus
Macro- and Meso-level	Social structures	Power relations in social structures
Micro-Level	Identity-building process	Social construction of gender
Representational level	Symbolic and cultural representations	Norms, ideologies, cultural systems and symbolic representations

Table 4: The three dimensions of gender relations based on Winker and Degele 2009

- **Macro- and Meso-level:** Focus of attention are power relations in social structure such as family or labour market. “Gemeint sind damit all jene institutionellen Regulative, in denen die Verteilung und Organisation der gesamtgesellschaftlich notwendigen Arbeit und des gesellschaftlichen Reichtums erfolgt sowie auch langlebige und veränderungsresistente Entscheidungsstrukturen verankert sind”, summarize Degele and Winker (2009:19) in reference to the sociologists John Scott and Jose Lopez (Social Structure). The structural level is strongly intertwined with the level of agency (Lopez 2003: 4):
- **Micro-level:** the formation of identity, social construction of gender: The micro-level deals with the social construction of identities and the process of subjectification. In order to become accountable (Zimmermann and West 1997) or intelligible (Butler 1990) as subjects, individuals produce their identities in repeated acts. Gender, for example, is not something you own or possess, but something you constantly need to do to become a subject (Zimmermann and West 1997).
- **Representational level:** symbolic and cultural representations: This level encompasses the norms, ideologies, cultural systems and symbolic representations on the level of discourse such as gender roles: “Denn auch symbolische Repräsentationen ‘machen’ in Form von Anrufungen, wie sie in Werbebotschaften, Gesetzen oder Massenmedien materialisiert sind, Strukturen und Herrschaftsverhältnisse” (Degele and Winker 2011: 78)

All of these three levels are deeply intertwined and constantly (re)create each other:

“Identitätskonstruktionen von Akteuren und Repräsentationen sind also über Performativität miteinander verknüpft und bringen Strukturen hervor. Die hergestellten Strukturen wiederum werden

nur im Vollzug aktiv. Identitäten und Repräsentationen sind damit strukturerhaltende und –bildende Faktoren” (Degele and Winker 2011: 78)

#### Results:

Regarding gender relations, the pure numbers already tell us quite a lot: While the term man/men occurs only 84 times in the document, the term woman/women appears about 12 times as often, which is in total numbers: 1019 times. Gender is used merely 15 times throughout the whole Nairobi Declaration, mainly in terms of gender-specific data. Sex, meaning the biological gender, occurs 13 times. This indicates a one-sided focus on measures for the advancement of women without taking the gender perspective into consideration. The unequal power relations between men and women are addressed on various levels.

#### Social structures:

The Nairobi Declaration addresses several societal fields where “structural imbalances”<sup>152</sup> permeate and structure power relations between men and women. “(C)hronic inequalities, injustices and exploitative conditions at the family, community, national, subregional, regional and international levels”<sup>153</sup> are considered as intensifying factors for “the economic exploitation, marginalization and oppression of women”<sup>154</sup> in general. Gender is identified as a major structural category (Becker-Schmidt 2000) in family, legislation, health system and economic structures such as the labour market. In the latter, the discrimination of women is considered to be twofold: on the one hand, structural inequalities such as horizontal and vertical segregation limit women’s chances of full participation on the labour market. On the other hand, the effects of the sexual division of labour, leaving unpaid household and reproduction responsibilities to women, is exacerbated by the devaluation of care work in contrary to the hegemonially acknowledged value of remunerated work. In this context, the Nairobi declaration falls into the trap of the second of three methodological universalisms that Chandra Mohanty examines in ‘Under Western Eyes’. Specific concepts such as family, marriage, household or in this case the sexual division of labour are directly transferred from the Western perspective to other cultures without putting them into their specific local or cultural contexts.

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<sup>152</sup> Nairobi 4

<sup>153</sup> Nairobi 1

<sup>154</sup> Nairobi 1

Gendered power relations are, if named, usually referred to as women's "oppression"<sup>155</sup>, "subordination"<sup>156</sup>, "dependence"<sup>157</sup> or "exploitation"<sup>158</sup>. These nouns require a personalized perpetrator – oppressed by, subordinated to, dependent on, exploited by – who in every case is understood as 'men' in general. The domination concepts of gender relations, implied by the particular choice of vocabulary, reflect a one-dimensional notion of power in general: Power is something exercised by people who possess it (men) over people who lack it (women).

#### Identity:

The Nairobi Declaration does not deal with the micro-level regarding interactive processes of identity formation.

#### Representational level:

On the representational level, the Nairobi Declaration first and foremost addresses sex-based stereotyping (including perception of women and traditional attitudes toward women) as the "root of continuing discrimination"<sup>159</sup>, which encompasses "cultural, institutional, behavioural and attitudinal."<sup>160</sup>

"The continuation of women's stereotyped reproductive and productive roles, justified primarily on physiological, social and cultural grounds, has subordinated them in the general as well as sectoral spheres of development, even where some progress has been achieved."<sup>161</sup>

These cultural grounds derive from the "general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by underdevelopment"<sup>162</sup>, which is considered a product of various forms of oppressions (imperialism, colonialism, racism, etc.) and exacerbated by the "unjust international economic relations."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Nairobi 1

<sup>156</sup> Nairobi 93

<sup>157</sup> Nairobi 290

<sup>158</sup> Nairobi 27

<sup>159</sup> Nairobi 39

<sup>160</sup> Nairobi 11

<sup>161</sup> Nairobi 93

<sup>162</sup> Nairobi 44

<sup>163</sup> Nairobi 44



The physiological grounds are regarded as basic discursive strategy for devaluating the capacities of women<sup>164</sup>:

“One of the fundamental obstacles to women’s equality is that de facto discrimination and inequality in the status of women and men derive from larger social, economic, political and cultural factors that have been justified on the basis of physiological differences.”<sup>165</sup>

The emphasis clearly lies on physiological differences as main argumentative strand for difference, gender as a social construct is not mentioned in this context. The alleged binarity of social ‘gender’ and biological ‘sex’ is not questioned as category of analysis. This may lead to the conclusion that the Nairobi Declaration is centered within the axis of difference and equality or at least does not consider constructivist positions.

Still, the Nairobi Declaration itself is not exactly unsuspicious of disseminating these unreflected gender roles that are so heavily critized in the document. In different topical contexts, women are constantly ascribed certain roles (the caretaker and nourisher, the peace keeper, the community builder, etc.).

The sociologist Sylvia Walby, the first UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, defines patriarchy as a “system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women“ (Walby 1997:20). Although there are differentiations from time to time, the notion of a patriarchy pervades the Nairobi Declaration, painting the image of oppressors who possess power (men) versus the suppressed who lack thereof (women).

#### **4.5.2. Differentiation and generalization**

The Nairobi Declaration deals with social categories, differences and the concept of self-contained identities in very incoherent ways. While in certain parts of the text generalizations are applied without further reflection, other areas provide a more differentiated view. Once again, the involvement of multifaceted interest groups is reflected here, expressed by the Declaration’s pieced together character. Various times throughout the document, the consideration of grounds of

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<sup>164</sup> Nairobi 45

<sup>165</sup> Nairobi 45

discrimination other than gender is urged. The Declaration speaks of “(...) categories of women who, because of their special characteristics, are experiencing not only the common problems (...) but also specific difficulties due to their socio-economic and health condition, age, minority status or a combination of these factors.”<sup>166</sup> In different contexts, lists of categories appear in varying compositions, usually including race, colour, ethnicity, socio-economic status and religion. However, apart from mentioning them from time to time, the Declaration does not fundamentally integrate structural categories in the analysis or development of strategies, which leaves the impression of lip servicing special interest groups.

The concept of social differences is self-contained, they are regarded as categories which, if combined, lead to multiple discrimination: “Additional differences, such as race, colour and ethnicity, may have even more serious implications in some countries, since such factors can be used as justification for compound discrimination.”<sup>167</sup>

The so-called ‘Areas of special Concern’ refer to groups of women affected by this type of discrimination. Here the categories age, socio-economic background, migration, disability, legal status and violence are the main topics:

<b>Areas of special concern</b>	<b>Structural category</b>
1. Women in areas affected by drought	Socio-economic status
2. Urban poor women	Socio-economic status
3. Elderly women	Age
4. Young women	Age
5. Abused women	Violence
6. Destitute women	Socio-economic status
7. Women victims of trafficking and involuntary prostitution	Violence
8. Women deprived of their traditional means of livelihood	Socio-economic status
9. Women who are the sole supporters of families	Socio-economic status
10. Women with physical and mental disabilities	Disability
11. Women in detention and subject to penal law	Legal status
12. Refugee and displaced women and children	Migration

<sup>166</sup> Nairobi 277

<sup>167</sup> Nairobi 46

13. Migrant women

Migration

14. Minority and "indigenous" women

Race, culture, ethnicity

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Table 5: Areas of special concern and their structural categories

#### ***4.6. Beijing: Rhetorical Means: Topics***

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Agriculture/Land	30
Children	72
Culture	51
Debt/SAP	23
Development	87
Disability	24
Economy	126
Education	128
Employment	101
Environment	34
Equality	147
Family	55
Health	74
Household/Family responsibilities	34
Human Rights	95
Hunger/Food	32
Legislation	94
Media	33
Migration/Refugee	29
Parenthood	32
Peace/War	67
Politics/Decision-making	99
Population	11
Poverty	54
Prostitution/Trafficking	17
Religion	19
Science/Research	62
Social issues	92
Technology	56
Violence	85

Table 6: Topics in the Beijing document

Poverty: Poverty is described as a “complex, multidimensional problem, with origins in both the national and international domains“<sup>168</sup> that has various manifestations such as

“(…) lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion.“<sup>169</sup>

Moreover, poverty is characterized by “lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life.“<sup>170</sup> This definition is not limited to the access to material and financial resources but additionally encompasses aspects of social inclusion.

The continuing “feminization of poverty“<sup>171</sup> is explained by a variety of factors: the gender disparities in economic power, the lack of gender mainstreaming in economic analysis and planning as well as the division of labour, weighing women with a disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities and causing interruptions in their work and consequently ruptures in their careers. All of these mutually reinforcing aspects lead the authors to the conclusion that “(t)he empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.“<sup>172</sup>

Education: As a basic human right and an essential tool for societal change, education occurs frequently throughout the Beijing document, inter alia because of its major contribution to “more equal relationships between men and women.“<sup>173</sup> Another important reason seems to be the general benefit of society as a whole that is emphasized in the following statement:

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<sup>168</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 47

<sup>169</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 47

<sup>170</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 47

<sup>171</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 48

<sup>172</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 49

<sup>173</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 89

“Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptional high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means to achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable.”<sup>174</sup>

The topic can be structured around two main columns: First, equal access to all levels of education is urgent matter of concern. Apart from some countries’ legislative barriers for women’s equal participation, discriminative practices including “customary attitudes”<sup>175</sup>, sexual harassment, the disproportionate distribution of domestic responsibilities as well as early pregnancies or marriages are identified as obstacles in the way of gender equality in educational access. Second, stereotypization within the educational system, encompassing gender-biased curricula and teaching materials, lack of gender awareness by teachers and the reinforcement of traditional gender roles, have a profound impact on the development of young women. This includes women’s reduced access to scientific and technological subjects as well as lifelong learning opportunities. Stereotypization, however, is not only limited to gender, as the document seeks to “(e)nsure that gender, equality, and cultural, religious and other diversity are respected in educational institutions”.<sup>176</sup>

The literacy of women as an “important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family”<sup>177</sup> is emphasized. This reflects foremost the common public interest rather than the personal empowerment of women.

Health: The topic consists of various different aspects and includes a lot of strategies and recommendations, which reflects the general importance attached to by the Beijing Conference. Health is not regarded as an isolated, unrelated issue, but it is rather embedded in a broad structural and societal perspective: “Women’s health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being and is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as biology.”<sup>178</sup> The role of women is described as “mothers and caregivers”.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 69

<sup>175</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 71

<sup>176</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 83p

<sup>177</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 89

<sup>178</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 89

<sup>179</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 89

In general, difference as well as diversity (both concepts can be retraced here) play quite an important role in this context. On the level of gender relations, the unequal access to health resources, the different vulnerability to health conditions, respectively the experience of certain diseases or the lack of gendered medicine and drugs that are not solely based on men, are important issues. Women's particular health-related position is explained by a variety of factors:

“The prevalence among women of poverty and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitudes towards women and girls, discrimination due to race and other forms of discrimination, the limited power many women have over their sexual and reproductive lives and lack of influence in decision-making are social realities which have an adverse impact on their health.”<sup>180</sup>

The differentiation, however, does not spare the category ‘women’ itself, as “socio-economic disparities and other differences among women”<sup>181</sup> such as “different geographical regions, social classes and indigenous and ethnic groups”<sup>182</sup> need to be considered for effective health programmes. Issues of reproductive and sexual health including the right to safe sex as well as fertility control and family planning, which “forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights”<sup>183</sup>, are of great concern. As women and girls suffer from “limited power (...) over their sexual and reproductive lives”<sup>184</sup>, equal relationships between women and men and “the full respect for the integrity of the person”<sup>185</sup> are regarded as essential foundations for sexual relations. This notion of power occurs again concerning sexually transmitted diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS: Women “often do not have the power to insist on safe and responsible sex practices.”<sup>186</sup>

Violence: According to the document, violence against women affects all societies, cutting across “lines of income, class and culture.”<sup>187</sup> It occurs in the family (sexual abuse, marital rape, exploitation), the general community (rape, sexual harassment, intimidation at work, trafficking, forced prostitution) and is sometimes condoned by the state. Gender-based violence encompasses

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<sup>180</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 92

<sup>181</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 90

<sup>182</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 89

<sup>183</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 97

<sup>184</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 95

<sup>185</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 96

<sup>186</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 98

<sup>187</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 112

femals genital mutilation and “other traditional practices harmful to women”<sup>188</sup>, forced sterilization and abortion, prenatal sex selection and infanticide. Some groups of women (for example indigenous, migrants, destitute, disabled, elderly, etc.) are regarded as especially susceptible to violent treatment. The breeding ground is located in cultural and traditional practices:

“Violence against women throughout the life cycle derives essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplace, the community and society.”<sup>189</sup>

The analysis of violence as an important instrument to preserve the unequal power relationships between men and women seems particularly interesting: It serves as “one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men”<sup>190</sup>, elsewhere reinforced as “the domination over (...) women by men.”<sup>191</sup> It is also aggravated by social pressures, “notably the shame of denouncing certain acts that have been perpetrated against women”<sup>192</sup>, which makes “men’s group mobilizing against gender violence (...) necessary allies for change.”<sup>193</sup>

Peace/War: In context of armed conflicts, primarily war crimes and massive violations of human rights and their gender-related effects are discussed. The document in particular addresses systematic rape and forced pregnancies as tactics of war and terrorism, affecting women and girls “because of their status in society and their sex.”<sup>194</sup> This distinctive differentiation suggests that the systematic exposure to sexual violence as a war instrument does not merely originate from women’s societal position including their symbolic value and cultural attributions, but must also be traced in biological factors , inter alia the female body.

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<sup>188</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 113a

<sup>189</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>190</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 117

<sup>191</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>192</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>193</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 120

<sup>194</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 135



The role of women is regarded as crucial, both in war situations and for the successful promotion of peace. In the situation of armed conflicts “(t)hey often work to preserve social order”<sup>195</sup>, and “become caregivers for injured combatants”<sup>196</sup>, which clearly positions them as the nurturing gender. On the other hand, “(t)he equal access and full participation of women in power structures (...) are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security”<sup>197</sup>, as women are “a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels.”<sup>198</sup> The “leading role”<sup>199</sup> of women in the peace movement must be recognized for an effective promotion of disarmament and a peaceful solution of conflicts. For that, education to “foster a culture of peace that upholds justice and tolerance for all nations”<sup>200</sup> is regarded an essential precondition.

Apart from that, the document is also concerned with the situation of displaced women (and children) and the international trade of weapons including landmines.

Employment: The Beijing document explicitly distinguishes between remunerated work in the formal and non-formal labour market and its unremunerated equivalent including family responsibilities, domestic work, care and community duties, voluntary assistance and environment protection. Both forms are equally treated and valued. As far as the former is concerned, a slight advancement of women’s participation in the workforce, in particular self-employment and entrepreneurship, is observed. They even “have often become preferred workers”<sup>201</sup> because of the low pay and poor working conditions women have been forced to accept. Women’s particular difficult status on the labour market is, on the one hand, explained by the continuing structural discrimination in hiring, remuneration and promotion (leading to occupational segregation and the gender pay gap) as well as the lack of family-friendly working environments with child care possibilities. On the other hand, attitudinal obstacles such as missing awareness for women’s contributions to economic wealth including unremunerated work in the production of goods for

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<sup>195</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 139

<sup>196</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 133

<sup>197</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 134

<sup>198</sup> Beijing Declaration 18

<sup>199</sup> Beijing Declaration 28

<sup>200</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 140

<sup>201</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 151

market and household consumption are taken into account, as well as the notion that domestic work is women's duty.

The characterization of women as successful micro-entrepreneurs “whose collaborative, self-help and traditional practices and initiatives in production and trade represent a vital economic resource”<sup>202</sup> is worth mentioning, inter alia harnessed by development assistance initiatives such as the granting of micro-credits.

Politics/Decision-making: The term ‘politics’ is basically used to describe the domain of societal decision-making, mainly structured by power relations. The argumentation for the necessity of more women in political, legal and administrative positions consists of two strands: On the one hand, matters of representation play an important role as equal participation “will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy.”<sup>203</sup> On the other hand, the increase of female decision-makers are regarded as a “necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account”<sup>204</sup> and, consequently, for the goals of equality, development and peace. Due to the structural and attitudinal barriers leading to systematic exclusion of women from political power, they have made alternative structures accessible, demonstrating leadership in community and participating in non-governmental organisations.

“Non-formal networks and patterns of decision-making (...) that reflect a dominant male ethos”<sup>205</sup> are explicitly mentioned as an impediment for women's equal participation.

Human rights: The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, forms the basis for the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights discussed in the document. Concerning the particular rights of women, the Beijing document states:

“Recognition of the importance of the human rights of women is reflected in the fact that three quarters of the State Members of the United Nations have become parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.”<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 162

<sup>203</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 181

<sup>204</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 181

<sup>205</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 185

However, the absence of their effective enjoyment and implementation in many countries is clearly recognized and, inter alia, explained by governments' lacking commitment and their failure to offer comprehensive information. An important focus lies on the integration of women's rights into the mainstream of United Nations structures and activities, taking relevant bodies and mechanisms under scrutiny. Legal literacy and media education are regarded as effective in "helping women to understand the link between their rights and other aspects of their lives"<sup>207</sup> and as an example that "women can be empowered and motivated to assert their rights."<sup>208</sup>

Media: The media's role in the document is twofold: First, mass media is often addressed as valuable ally for educational purposes and the dissemination of important information concerning a variety of development-related topics. They relatively often occur in context of strategies and actions. On the other hand, they are center of heavy critique on an organizational level as well as in regards to form and content. The communications sector as a whole lacks gender sensitivity, inter alia reflected by the lack of female decision-makers. The nonexistent awareness for gender issues results in the "continued projection of negative and degrading images of women"<sup>209</sup>, being "violent and degrading"<sup>210</sup> as well as reinforcing women's traditional roles. Additionally, the document observes a lack of women's access to electronic information highways which deprives them of alternative sources of information.

Environment: At first glance, the recurrent link between poverty and environmental degradation attracts attention:

"While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances."<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 215

<sup>207</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 227

<sup>208</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 227

<sup>209</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 236

<sup>210</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 236

<sup>211</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 246

The deterioration of natural resources affects women in particular, displacing them from income-generating activities and confronting them with health risks. In general, women “as consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators”<sup>212</sup> are ascribed an important role for the promotion of sustainable development and the protection of environment. Women “are generally the most stable members of the community”<sup>213</sup>, which leaves them to “safeguard”<sup>214</sup> the natural environment. Repeatedly their experience and skills as well as their “particular knowledge of ecological linkages” (above all attributed to indigenous women) are emphasized. Due to these qualities, women have “often played leadership roles”<sup>215</sup> in pushing an “environmental ethic”<sup>216</sup> and “influencing sustainable consumption decisions.”<sup>217</sup> While they are present on a local level, women still remain unequal participants at levels of policy formulation and environmental management. All these reasons lead to the conclusion that “sustainable development policies that do not involve women and men alike will not succeed in the long run.”<sup>218</sup>

Children: In general, in consistence with article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child should be

“(...) registered immediately after birth and has the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents”<sup>219</sup>

Throughout the Beijing document, the combination ‘women and children’ in this exact wording occurs relatively often (21 times). In a chapter of its own the document deals with the critical situation of the “girl child” (L) and her specific challenges and needs. Violence against women in any form, in particular female infanticide, prenatal sex selection or female genital mutilation, is identified as main reason for the lower survival rate of female children. On an attitudinal level, “(g)irls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their

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<sup>212</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 248

<sup>213</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>214</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>215</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>216</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>217</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>218</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 251

<sup>219</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 274

self-esteem.“<sup>220</sup> This and other forms of discrimination such as “confusing messages on their gender roles“<sup>221</sup> can initiate a “lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream.“<sup>222</sup>

According to the text, another barrier for the personal development of girls is the lacking access to education, inter alia exacerbated by the double burden of educational and domestic responsibilities, and to nutrition and health services. Early motherhood and the risks attached to it, child labour as well as girls’ vulnerability to the consequences of unprotected sex are of great concern. Therefore, adolescents must be enabled to deal with their sexuality and especially young men need to develop “responsibility (...) for their own sexuality and fertility.“<sup>223</sup> For all these areas of concern, the role of the family must be strengthened.

Culture: This topic consists of various strands, as the term encompasses a broad, complex field on multifaceted levels. First, it is used to describe a societal field, an area of analysis: In this context, culture is regarded of equal value as economy, politics or social issues, which is reflected in the consequent listing of those four fields together (for example: “economic, social, cultural and political decision-making“<sup>224</sup>). The occurrence of culture in connection to fine arts as exemplified in the promotion of girls’ participation “in extracurricular activities, such as sports, drama and cultural activities“<sup>225</sup> is less frequent. Most of the time, however, culture is applied as set of shared values, attitudes and practices.

The discussion of the latter is characterized by the overlapping of different, partially antagonistic, discourses as well as contradictory statements. On the one hand, the document encourages the respect for and protection of cultural diversity, inter alia regarding indigenous women. In the development of certain strategies and measures cultural differences and traditions need to be taken into account. In this context, diffident attempts to mainstream culture can be partially traced in the document:

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<sup>220</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 260

<sup>221</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 262

<sup>222</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 260

<sup>223</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 267

<sup>224</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 1

<sup>225</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 280d

“While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of State, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedom.”<sup>226</sup>

While at first glance the sentence seems quite paradox, it could imply the need for a cultural contextualization of certain human-rights-related measures that must be implemented deliberately and sensitively in regard to the particular cultural background. The promotion of the right for pregnancy termination, for example, faces different challenges depending on the target group’s religious or cultural beliefs and attitudes.

On the other hand, cultural practices are, both implicitly and explicitly, often equated with an impediment to women’s advancement and development. “(C)ustomary attitudes”<sup>227</sup> discriminate women “based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes”<sup>228</sup>, “traditional or customary practices”<sup>229</sup> such as female gender mutilation, forced or early marriage, prenatal sex selection or female infanticide expose women and girls to (life-threatening) violence. The latter even derives “essentially from cultural patterns.”<sup>230</sup> Again, the modernizational concept of culture permeates this analysis, while elsewhere the significance of cultural diversity and the right to traditions and cultural customs are emphasized.

Migration/Refugees: Issues of migration appear as a cross-sectional matter throughout the document, where the situation of migrant and/or displaced women is constantly considered. The economic recession is regarded as the main reason for labour migration which has had a “disproportionately negative impact on women’s employment.”<sup>231</sup> The situation of migrant women is described as precarious and critical, as they experience structural disadvantages compared to both non-migrant workers and their male counterparts. However, they “contribute to the economy of the sending country (...) and also to the economy of the receiving country”<sup>232</sup> and are therefore valueable members of society. Furthermore, they “in most cases display strength, endurance and

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<sup>226</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 9

<sup>227</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 71

<sup>228</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 124k

<sup>229</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>230</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>231</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 19

<sup>232</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 154

resourcefulness and can contribute positively<sup>233</sup> to both countries. The particular vulnerability and potential of exploitation needs to be recognized and full access to all societal spheres, especially education and health institutions, must be guaranteed.

A special form of migration is the increasing urbanization which is regarded as a consequence of “profound changes in family survival strategies and structures.”<sup>234</sup> The rural to urban migration, resulting from different reasons such as voluntary movement, displacement, etc., primarily affects “family structures and well-being”<sup>235</sup> and has “unequal consequences for women and men, including in many cases the sexual exploitation of women.”<sup>236</sup>

Regarding the particular situation of displaced women and refugees, various issues are mentioned: First, persecution through sexual violence or other gender-related persecution is sometimes not recognized as asylum reasons by some countries. Besides, the principle of non-refoulement of refugees must be fully respected, while simultaneously the voluntary return to the place of origin “in safety and with dignity”<sup>237</sup> should be pursued. In general, the equal access and treatment of women and men in asylum procedures and refugee determination is of crucial concern, keeping in mind that the factors for women’s flight “may be different from those affecting men.”<sup>238</sup>

Structural adjustment programmes/Debt: Structural adjustment programmes are center of heavy critique throughout the Beijing document. “As a result of the debt burden and other economic difficulties”<sup>239</sup>, these policies, partly “poorly designed and implemented”<sup>240</sup> tend to have “detrimental effects on social development”<sup>241</sup> and are “thereby adversely affecting women.”<sup>242</sup> Due to the deterioration of the public social system, the responsibility for basic social services is transferred from the state to women. Moreover, they suffer from additional disadvantage caused by the economic and social marginalization, as SAPs “have not been designed to minimize their negative

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<sup>233</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 137

<sup>234</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 36

<sup>235</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 26

<sup>236</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 36

<sup>237</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 174d

<sup>238</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 226

<sup>239</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 13

<sup>240</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 13

<sup>241</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 13

<sup>242</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 18

effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups or on women, nor have they been designed to assure positive effects on those groups.”<sup>243</sup>

Gender mainstreaming structural adjustment programmes is therefore of great concern as well as a thoughtful handling of the problems attached to external debt. For that, “effective development-oriented and durable solutions”<sup>244</sup> need to be found, in order to “help”<sup>245</sup> ‘developing countries’, including reduction, cancellation (“debt forgiveness”<sup>246</sup>) or relief measures.

Disability: Being a cross-sectional matter, disability issues occur in almost every topic such as education, health, violence, human rights, etc., in particular as an obligatory item in recommended strategies and instruments. Regarding the latter, the specific situation of women with disabilities or “special needs”<sup>247</sup> is always considered an essential aspect when planning measures. The enhancement of self-reliance as well as equal access to employment, including the adjustment of working conditions and the provision of leadership, are supposed to improve the active participation of disabled women in all aspects of society.

Agriculture/Land: As one of the main preconditions for an equal and fair participation of women in agricultural economy, the Beijing document urges for the provision to and control of land by ensuring the right to land ownership and inheritance, which are still not guaranteed in all countries. Apart from that, the unremunerated work of women in the production of goods in agriculture must be recognized and valued, especially their central role in subsistence production, where they provide the main labour force. Women working in the agricultural sector are regarded as important allies for the protection of environment and the enhancement of sustainable development. Also, their “central role in food and agricultural research”<sup>248</sup> must be strengthened.

Food/Hunger: Women’s “vital role”<sup>249</sup> in food production encompassing the preparation of food for the family, food security, subsistence production or food gathering is emphasized repeatedly

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<sup>243</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 18

<sup>244</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 59c

<sup>245</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 59c

<sup>246</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 59c

<sup>247</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 193a

<sup>248</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 82f

<sup>249</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 166e



throughout the document. Their contribution must be valued and strengthened by providing them with technical training and the access to basic resources. However, it is interesting that, although the equal share of unremunerated work in general is of frequent concern, the increase of men's participation in food issues is not subject matter. Regarding the distribution of food within the household, the Beijing document identifies gender discrimination, mostly due to son preference: "Existing discrimination against the girl child in her access to nutrition (...) endangers her current and future health."<sup>250</sup>

Science/Research: The topic mainly consists of three strands, all of which occur frequently in the document. First, in almost every context ranging from poverty over violence to economical issues, the lack of a systematically collected, gender-disaggregated data is criticized. On a more epistemological level, the development of "conceptual and practical methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives"<sup>251</sup>, including the implementation of women's studies, is urged. Especially health research with its gender-insensitive studies concentrating on the man as general reference, should be replaced by gendered medicine. Additionally, other demographic criteria should be taken into account, that "serve the interests and solve the problems of subgroups, with particular emphasis on the vulnerable and marginalized and other relevant variables."<sup>252</sup>

Second, matters of representation and participation are addressed with the need for more women in decision-making positions and with a special focus on the problem of both horizontal and vertical gender segregation regarding scientific fields: "Advanced study in science and technology prepares women to take an active role in their technological and industrial development of their countries"<sup>253</sup>. This leads to the final area of concern, which deals with the negative effects of attitudes and stereotypes, reflected in gender-biased curricula and teaching materials as well as the lack of encouragement for the "contribution of research by women scientists and technologists."<sup>254</sup> Especially science textbooks "do not relate to women's and girls' daily experience and fail to give recognition to women scientists."<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 55

<sup>251</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 67

<sup>252</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 104

<sup>253</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 75

<sup>254</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 175h

<sup>255</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 75

Forced prostitution/Trafficking: The Beijing document identifies women in poverty, armed conflicts and war as well as female children as the main targets of trafficking and “sexual exploitation, pornography, forced prostitution and sex tourism.”<sup>256</sup> Girls “are both biologically and psychosocially more vulnerable than boys to sexual abuse, violence and prostitution”<sup>257</sup> and often “subjected to various forms of sexual (...) exploitation”.<sup>258</sup> At this point, the question may arise in which way adolescent girls are biologically more vulnerable and what is meant by the term ‘biological’ – do the writers simply refer to the anatomy of the body or also to the physiognomy? By not going into details and the lack of contextualization, this analysis might have an essentializing effect on the gender positions, without focussing on the discursive practices leading to the described situation.

“The use of women”<sup>259</sup> and the “effective suppression of trafficking in women and girls for the sex trade”<sup>260</sup> requires international concern in order to eliminate the violation of human rights as well as to rehabilitate and support victims of trafficking.

Household/Family responsibilities: The Beijing document regards the family as “the basic unit of society”<sup>261</sup> in which women play a “critical role”.<sup>262</sup> As already mentioned above, the document actively values women’s often unrecognized contribution to household and family responsibilities, which is reflected in the frequent consideration and the consequent differentiation between remunerated and unremunerated work. Partly, an enhancement in the unbalanced gender-biased distribution of domestic tasks is identified:

“The boundaries of the gender division of labour between productive and reproductive roles are gradually being crossed as women have started to enter formerly male-dominated areas of work and men have started to accept greater responsibility for domestic tasks, including child care. However, changes in women’s roles have been greater and much more rapid than changes in men’s roles.”<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 230n

<sup>257</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 93

<sup>258</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 39

<sup>259</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 122

<sup>260</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 122

<sup>261</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 29

<sup>262</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 29

<sup>263</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 27

On the one hand, this encompasses the rise of female-maintained households and the increasing dependence of households on female income “even when men are present”<sup>264</sup>, as women have assumed the double burden of both entering the labour market and still being responsible for family duties. On the other hand, men have not simultaneously accepted domestic work by contributing equally in the household, leaving the “care of children, the sick and the elderly”<sup>265</sup> or the management of household consumption and production still unproportionately in the hands of women. This, in turn, limits “women’s potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public forums.”<sup>266</sup> Therefore, particularly boys should be taught skills “necessary to take care of their own domestic needs and to share responsibility for their household and for the care of dependants.”<sup>267</sup>

Parenthood: In general, the equal division of parental responsibilities between men, women and “society as a whole”<sup>268</sup> is regarded as a pressing concern, especially to ensure that “(m)aternity, motherhood, parenting and the role of women in procreation”<sup>269</sup> does not combine with discrimination and a restriction to full participation in society. This includes the elimination of discriminatory practices by employers such as dismissal because of pregnancy etc. Two special situations of parenthood are treated in particular: Single mothers who are the sole supporters of the household and young mothers. Regarding the latter, early child-bearing is considered “an impediment to improvements in the educational, economic and social status of women in all parts of the world”<sup>270</sup>, which not only affects the quality of their lives but also “the lives of their children”.<sup>271</sup> An additional aggravation is the lacking awareness of young men who “are often not educated to respect women’s self-determination and to share responsibility with women in matters of sexuality and reproduction.”<sup>272</sup> Remarkably, this attitude is not essentially ascribed to men without the consideration of its societal production process but rather explained by the lack of education and socialization.

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<sup>264</sup> Beijing Platform for Action

<sup>265</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 30

<sup>266</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 185

<sup>267</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 83b

<sup>268</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 29

<sup>269</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 29

<sup>270</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 93

<sup>271</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 93

<sup>272</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 93

The access to “safe, effective, affordable and acceptable”<sup>273</sup> methods of family planning is another important aspect, always with the cautious endorsement “which are not against the law”.<sup>274</sup> Abortion is shortly addressed with the urge to eliminate its need by ensuring optimal fertility control, while the document does not touch the governments’ sovereignty to their own legislation and therefore does not make a recommendation.

Religion: The document deals with religious issues in an ambivalent way: On the one hand, the right to freedom of thought and conscience is regarded as basic and inalienable, as

“(r)eligion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of millions of women and men, in the way they live and in the aspirations they have for the future.”<sup>275</sup>

Any form of discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs is therefore harshly and consequently criticized throughout the document. On the other hand, even though the text stresses that religion “may, and can, contribute to fulfilling women’s and men’s moral, ethical and spiritual needs and to realizing their full potential in society”<sup>276</sup>, the topic also appears in negative contexts. Certain forms of violence against women, for example, are connected to “custom, tradition or religious consideration”<sup>277</sup> and governments are urged to “(t)ake steps so that tradition and religion and their expressions are not a basis for discrimination against girls.”<sup>278</sup>

Equality: Alongside development and peace, gender equality both as goal and instrument is given top priority by the Beijing document, it is considered as a “condition for social justice”<sup>279</sup> and a basic “matter of human rights.”<sup>280</sup> The “differences between women’s and men’s achievements and activities”<sup>281</sup> are regarded as “consequences of socially constructed gender roles rather than

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<sup>273</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 94

<sup>274</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 94

<sup>275</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 24

<sup>276</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 24

<sup>277</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 80a

<sup>278</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 276

<sup>279</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 41

<sup>280</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 41

<sup>281</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 27

immutable biological differences.”<sup>282</sup> In this context, first and foremost the improvement of women’s status is of great concern:

“Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”<sup>283</sup>

However, the achievement of equality “should not be seen in isolation as a womens’ issue”<sup>284</sup>. Therefore men’s equal contribution to traditionally female-associated areas such as household, care work, the upbringing of children or other unremunerated tasks is urged as well. Interestingly, the family is regarded as point of origin for gender-biased processes:

“Inequality in the public arena can often start with dsicriminatory attitudes and practices and unequal power relations between women and men within the family.”<sup>285</sup>

The use of the term ‘public’ supports the traditional, gender-related differentiation between public and private spheres, which was heavily criticized by the second women’s movement. Besides, the interaction between discursive norms and concrete practices is faded out when concentrating on an alleged initial point for gender discrimination.

Aparat from gender equality, other grounds for discrimination such as “race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability, because they are indigenous women or because of other status”<sup>286</sup> are taken into account repeatedly throughout the document, however, usually mentioned as an aside.

Development: The term is used both in a descriptive and a normative way, the latter one being of greater interest to this discourse analysis. In general, the Beijing Declaration formulates its comprehensive approach to developmental issues as follows:

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<sup>282</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 27

<sup>283</sup> Beijing Declaration 13

<sup>284</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 41

<sup>285</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 185

<sup>286</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 46

“We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development, which is the framework for our efforts to achieve a higher quality of life for all people.”<sup>287</sup>

In particular, the “social dimension”<sup>288</sup> of development is emphasized as “(a)ccelerated growth, although necessary for social development, does not by itself improve the quality of life of the population.”<sup>289</sup> However, the document also recognizes that “broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice.”<sup>290</sup> In sum, the central idea focusses on a development that is “people-centred”<sup>291</sup> as well as sustainable, which is only possible “through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women.”<sup>292</sup>

Legislation: Creating new laws, the implementation of legislative measures, the observation of existing laws, legislative and administrative reforms as well as eliminating the discrepancies between national and international law – all these recommendations and strategies can be found in almost every topic throughout the Beijing document. International humanitarian law and human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are considered as important and basic framework for the governments’ own legislations. Issues of representation and decision-making are of utter concern as the “underrepresentation of women in justice system”<sup>293</sup> as well as “persistent attitudes and practices”<sup>294</sup> reinforce their “de facto inequality.”<sup>295</sup> This is partly responsible for the lack of gender perspectives and mainstreaming in laws and legislation processes and amplified by women’s marginal access to legal information and the judicial process.

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<sup>287</sup> Beijing Declaration 36

<sup>288</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>289</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>290</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 36

<sup>291</sup> Beijing Declaration 27

<sup>292</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 56

<sup>293</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 219

<sup>294</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 219

<sup>295</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 219

Social issues: As a cross-sectional matter, the social sphere joins analytical fields such as culture, politics and economy. In particular the “social dimension of development”<sup>296</sup> is emphasized, “that recognizes empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty”<sup>297</sup> and includes the improvement of the “quality of life of the population.”<sup>298</sup> As economical transformations “are profoundly changing the parameters of social development”<sup>299</sup>, the Beijing document wants to ensure “that all members of society benefit from economic growth based on a holistic approach to all aspects of development”<sup>300</sup>, encompassing sustainability, social justice, solidarity, participation and respect for human rights. Additionally, social security is a matter of great importance, including a functioning health system, job security or legislative insurance measures.

Economy: The “(w)idespread economic recession”<sup>301</sup> and the increasing “globalization of world’s economy”<sup>302</sup> have led to massive difficulties in ‘developing countries’. The expansion of “unspeakable poverty”<sup>303</sup> is exacerbated through counterproductive measures such as structural adjustment programmes, massive debt or other economic restructuring, embedded in the system of economic inter- and dependence. Interestingly enough, after a specific text passage criticizing the negative effects of structural adjustment programmes on marginalized groups, the Final Act of the Uruguay Round<sup>304</sup> is brought up without comment, which underscores “the importance of trade liberalization and access to open, dynamic markets”<sup>305</sup>, which seems a bit contradictory. However, these developments entail a “disproportionate impact on women and children”<sup>306</sup> as social expenditures are more and more reduced.

As a major problem, the gender imbalances in economic power-sharing and decision-making are addressed as well as the lack of gender mainstreaming in economic policies:

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<sup>296</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>297</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 36

<sup>298</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>299</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 47

<sup>300</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>301</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 16

<sup>302</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 47

<sup>303</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 16

<sup>304</sup> The Uruguay Round came into effect in 1995 and transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into the World Trade Organization.

<sup>305</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 16

<sup>306</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 18

“Since it is often within the framework of such policies that individual men and women make their decision, inter alia, on how to divide their time between remunerated and unremunerated work, the actual development of these economic structures and policies has a direct impact on women’s and men’s access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the extent of equality between them and the individual and family levels as well as in society as a whole.”<sup>307</sup>

In general, women are regarded as “key contributors to the economy”<sup>308</sup>, which requires the promotion of their economic independence and autonomy as well as their equal access to economic resources such as “land, credit, science and technology, vocational training, information, communication and markets.”<sup>309</sup>

While a “broad-based and sustained”<sup>310</sup> economic growth is recognized as important precondition to “sustain social development and social justice”<sup>311</sup> it does not “by itself improve the quality of life of the population”<sup>312</sup>, sometimes even producing conditions which “can aggravate social inequality and marginalization.”<sup>313</sup> Therefore, a holistic approach to development is necessary.

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<sup>307</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 150

<sup>308</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 21

<sup>309</sup> Beijing Declaration 35

<sup>310</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 35

<sup>311</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 35

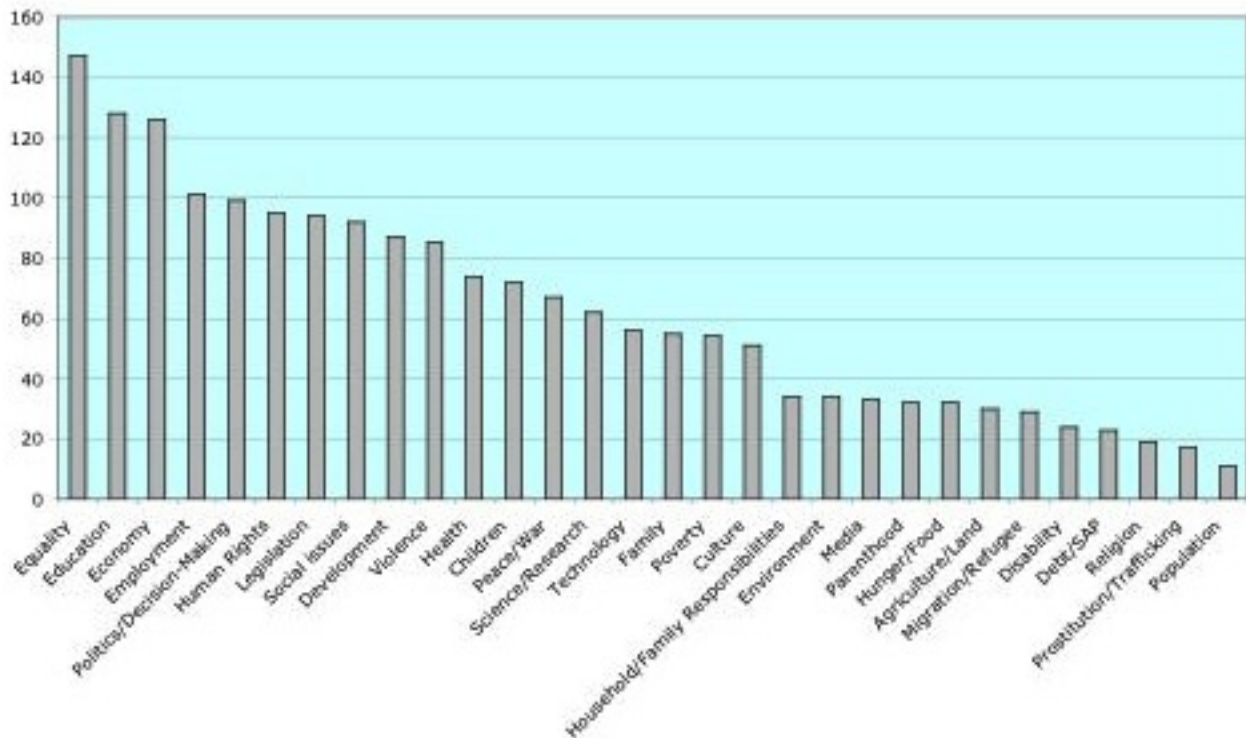
<sup>312</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14

<sup>313</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 14



#### 4.6.1. Summary topics

**Graph 6: Distribution of Topics in the Beijing Document**



As shown in the graph, the notion of equality permeates the whole Beijing document as major issue of the Fourth World Conference on Women. For the advancement of women, improvements in education, economy and labour market are high on the priority list as well as the increase of women's participation in politics and decision-making processes. The focus on human rights as both instrument and legitimation ground for gender equality seems notable as well.

#### **4.7. Beijing: Rhetorical Means: Arguments**

Commendation: The Beijing document addresses a variety of global and local players as well as individuals, as shown best in its pledge for comprehensive support:

“We urge the United Nations system, regional and international financial institutions, other relevant regional and international institutions and all women and men, as well as non governmental-

organizations (...) and all sectors of civil society, in cooperation with Governments, to fully commit themselves and contribute to the implementation of this Platform of Action.”<sup>314</sup>

Governments are invited to develop implementation strategies for the Platform by the end of 1996 and are repeatedly encouraged to “promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes.”<sup>315</sup> In this context, the language is partly quite insistent as they “must work actively”<sup>316</sup> or they “have a duty to guarantee the full enjoyment of all rights.”<sup>317</sup> However, institutions of the United Nations are also regarded as important allies and promoters of the Platform. The document locates a “need to renew, reform and revitalize various parts”<sup>318</sup> of the UN-system, including the strategies and methods for the advancement of women, which “must be further developed.”<sup>319</sup>

In terms of content, the document formulates strategic objectives that are subsequently elaborated considering the addresser such as governments, grassroot organizations, etc.. Regarding education, for example, these objectives range from “ensure equal access to education” over “eradicate illiteracy among women” to “develop non-discriminatory education and training.”<sup>320</sup>

Maximizing benefits: The argument supporting women’s advancement as the key to a greater good and a precondition for societal benefits appears throughout the Beijing document in context of almost every topic:

“Women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.”<sup>321</sup>

The equal sharing of family responsibilities between men and women is regarded as “critical to their well-being and that of their families as well as to the consolidation of democracy.”<sup>322</sup> Literacy of

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<sup>314</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 288

<sup>315</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 229

<sup>316</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 225

<sup>317</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 228

<sup>318</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 309

<sup>319</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 309

<sup>320</sup> Beijing Platform for Action B

<sup>321</sup> Beijing Declaration 13

women is considered an “important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family”.<sup>323</sup> In terms of economy, the “release of women’s productive potential”<sup>324</sup> is regarded “pivotal to breaking the cycle of poverty”<sup>325</sup>, their role as “key contributors to the economy”<sup>326</sup> makes their empowerment “a critical factor in the eradication of poverty”<sup>327</sup>. Especially in context of environmental issues, women are attributed “an important role in promoting sustainable development”<sup>328</sup> as well as “leadership roles”<sup>329</sup> in supporting environmental ethics. In most regions, they are “to safeguard the natural environment and ensure adequate and sustainable resource allocation within the household and the community.”<sup>330</sup>

The argument of maximizing benefits is frequently used particularly in context of war and peace. Peace is considered to be

“(...) inextricably linked with the advancement of women, who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and the promotion of lasting peace at all levels.”<sup>331</sup>

Their full participation in efforts of conflict prevention and resolution is “essential to the realization of lasting peace”<sup>332</sup> and “essential for the maintenance (...) of peace and security.”<sup>333</sup> Women’s important function in supporting societal coherence is stressed in times of war (“They often work to preserve social order in the midst of armed and other conflict.”<sup>334</sup>) as well as in general (“In certain regions, women are generally the most stable members of community, as men often pursue work in distant locations”<sup>335</sup>).

Finally it can be stated that, while used in almost every topic throughout the document, the argument of maximizing benefits does not occur that often. It is usually added to the advancement of women

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<sup>322</sup> Beijing Declaration 15

<sup>323</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 69

<sup>324</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 55

<sup>325</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 55

<sup>326</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 21

<sup>327</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 49

<sup>328</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 248

<sup>329</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>330</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 250

<sup>331</sup> Beijing Declaration 18

<sup>332</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 23

<sup>333</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 134

<sup>334</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 139

<sup>335</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 135

as a purpose of its own (moral claim) and not systematically applied as a strategy of backing up the need for change.

Generalization: Generalizations occur mainly in the description of women's roles (e.g. the “leading role that women have played in the peace movement”<sup>336</sup>) and functions in society and the particular consequences resulting from them (“Women are affected by many of the same health conditions as men, but women experience them differently.”<sup>337</sup>). Although the Beijing document usually pays attention to the differentiation within the category women and when analyzing power structures, there are some cases of rather vast generalizations. The situation of women in terms of violence, for example, is described as follows:

“In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture.”<sup>338</sup>

The generalization is twofold: all societies, no matter which cultural or geographical background, as well as every social stratum and category are lumped together – the overall category is ‘women’, a prior identity marker which unites them in all their differences.

Assumptions/Predictions: Assumptions occur very rarely, mainly in context of possible benefits from certain recommended measures (the skills of women “could constitute a major contribution to the economic life”<sup>339</sup>). Predictions are hardly ever made.

Moral claim: Almost each commendation and demand is based on moral claims, which generally root in human rights (in particular the charter of the United Nations) and the “inherent human dignity of women and men”<sup>340</sup>. The individual evolvement according to a person's needs, interests and beliefs builds the cornerstone, as the Beijing document emphasizes its commitment to

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<sup>336</sup> Beijing Declaration 28

<sup>337</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 92

<sup>338</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 112

<sup>339</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 159

<sup>340</sup> Beijing Declaration 8

“(t)he empowerment and advancement of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral, ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs of women and men, individually or in community with others and thereby guaranteeing them the possibility of realizing their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations.”<sup>341</sup>

This empowerment is supposed to “achieve a higher quality of life for all people”<sup>342</sup> and requires “urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solidarity.”<sup>343</sup> A second major strand is the claim for equality, which is regarded a basic precondition for “people-centred sustainable development”<sup>344</sup>, encompassing equal access to and participation in all spheres of society and a “commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities”<sup>345</sup> of women and men. In this context, the particular situation of people who “face multiple barriers to their empowerment”<sup>346</sup>, including “race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, or because they are indigenous people”<sup>347</sup> is pointed out, as the respect and valuation for “the full diversity of women’s situations and conditions”<sup>348</sup> are of important concern. According to the document, equality also entails social justice, which is another moral claim in the document. A “sustainable, just and developed”<sup>349</sup> as well as “peaceful, just and humane”<sup>350</sup> world furthermore requires “a culture of peace that upholds justice and tolerance”<sup>351</sup>, women’s control over their sexuality and reproductive decisions, the freedom of “thought, conscience and religion”<sup>352</sup> and the right to enjoy “cultural, economic, political and social development.”<sup>353</sup>

In general, it is remarkable that moral claims, without the additional safeguarding by the maximization of benefits, are used as arguments strong enough to stand alone, which could indicate

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<sup>341</sup> Beijing Declaration 12

<sup>342</sup> Beijing Declaration 36

<sup>343</sup> Beijing Declaration 7

<sup>344</sup> Beijing Declaration 27

<sup>345</sup> Beijing Declaration 36

<sup>346</sup> Beijing Declaration 32

<sup>347</sup> Beijing Declaration 32

<sup>348</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 3

<sup>349</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 41

<sup>350</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 4

<sup>351</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 140

<sup>352</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 24

<sup>353</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 220

the discursive importance of values and human rights at the time of the Beijing World Conference on Women.

Self-portrayal: The Platform for Action is considered “an agenda for women’s empowerment”<sup>354</sup> that aims at “accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.”<sup>355</sup> The United Nations are urged to consider “the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”<sup>356</sup> as a “priority objective”<sup>357</sup>. Instruments and institutions such as conventions and declarations (e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW), UN-commissions (e.g. the Commission on the Status of Women), Funds (the United Nations Children’s Fund, Unifem) and other relevant UN-organizations are both addressed and referred to as important puzzle pieces in the struggle for equality, development and peace. Their “cooperation and coordination”<sup>358</sup> must be enforced in order to “strengthen, rationalize and streamline the United Nations human rights system”<sup>359</sup>.

The document also strongly recommends to “renew, reform and revitalize various parts of the United Nations system”<sup>360</sup>, as its efficiency and effectiveness is not fully guaranteed, inter alia due to “unnecessary duplication and overlapping of mandates and tasks”.<sup>361</sup>

Apart from that, the Beijing document’s criticism of the persistent gender inequality does not spare the United Nations system itself:

“Fifty years after its creation, the United Nations is continuing to deny itself the benefits of women’s leadership by their underrepresentation at decision-making levels within the Secretariat and the specialized agencies.”<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 1

<sup>355</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 1

<sup>356</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 212

<sup>357</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 212

<sup>358</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 231g

<sup>359</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 221

<sup>360</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 309

<sup>361</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 221

<sup>362</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 28

Description: According to the document, the Fourth World Conference on Women is “taking place as the world stands poised on the threshold of a new millennium”<sup>363</sup>. While the improvement of international relations as well as “diminished competition between the super-Powers”<sup>364</sup>, due to the end of the Cold War, have increased “prospects for peace”<sup>365</sup>, armed conflicts and colonial domination continue to “plague many parts of the world”<sup>366</sup>, being one reason for the major debt burden carried by ‘developing countries’. The resulting poverty against the background of the “(w)idespread economic recession, as well as the political instability in some regions”<sup>367</sup> is reinforced by structural adjustment policies, which are regarded to entail “detrimental effects on social development”<sup>368</sup>. According to the document, especially women and children suffer from these economic developments, as they tend to have “a disproportionate impact”<sup>369</sup> on them. On the other hand, a “world-wide movement toward democratization”<sup>370</sup>, reaching from the end of the apartheid system in South Africa to the eastern European transition to parliamentary democracy, has “opened up the political process in many nations”<sup>371</sup>. However, women in key decision-making positions are still considered an exception. The Beijing document recognizes that the status of women “has advanced in some important respects in the past decade”<sup>372</sup>. However, “10 years after the Nairobi Conference, equality between women and men has still not been achieved.”<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Beijing Declaration 6

<sup>364</sup> Beijing Declaration 11

<sup>365</sup> Beijing Declaration 11

<sup>366</sup> Beijing Declaration 11

<sup>367</sup> Beijing Declaration 16

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<sup>369</sup> Beijing Declaration 18

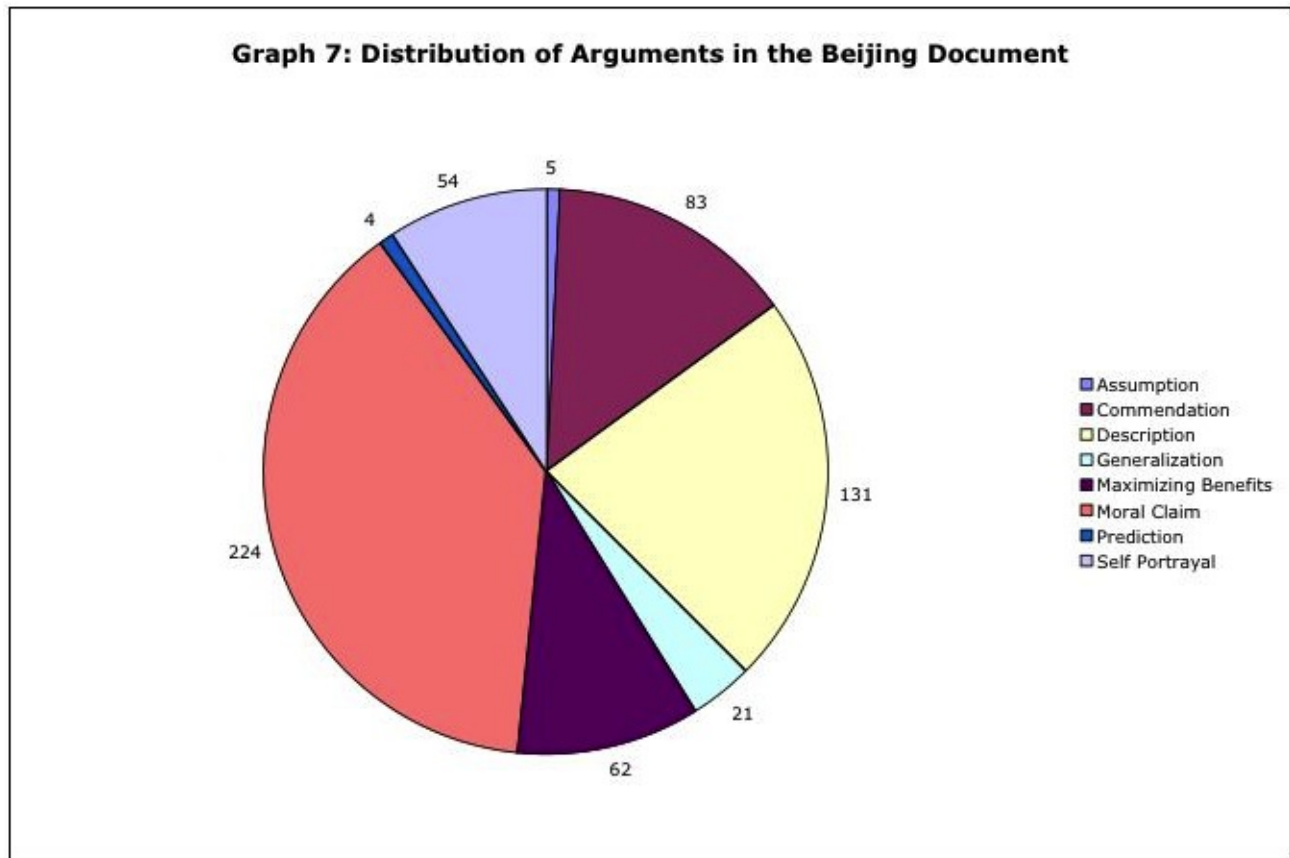
<sup>370</sup> Beijing Declaration 15

<sup>371</sup> Beijing Declaration 15

<sup>372</sup> Beijing Declaration 5

<sup>373</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 28

#### 4.7.1. Summary arguments



Moral claim is by far the most frequently used argument in the Beijing document, indicating the significance of human rights and values such as equality and justice attached by the conference. Also, description of situations and analyses of the status quo form an important part of the text. The argumentational strategy of referring to a greater profit and the maximization or benefits only sums up to 11 %. The frequency of self-portrayals occurring in the document is remarkable.



## **4.8. Beijing: Ideological Means**

### **4.8.1. Gender relations**

#### Social structures:

The Beijing document identifies “unjust social and economic structures, and a lack of resources in most countries”<sup>374</sup> as basic impediment for gender equality on a structural level. These structural imbalances encompass several societal fields, ranging from the educational and health system to employment and legislation. Through all these different areas of concern, the economic discrimination of women, in combination with the general imbalanced economic system, occurs as common topic. It is regarded as major category of analysis for women’s disadvantaged position in society. As one of its consequences, the “unequal power relations between women and men within the family”<sup>375</sup> are considered a starting point for inequality in the public arena:

“The unequal division of labour and responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations also limits women’s potential to find the time and develop the skills required for participation in decision-making in wider public forums.”<sup>376</sup>

However, the document states that there have been “important changes in the relationships between women and men”<sup>377</sup> in several countries and boundaries of gender division of labour are constantly crossed. The low economic and social position of women is also considered both a “cause and a consequence”<sup>378</sup> for violence against women, which is regarded as a social mechanism by “which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”<sup>379</sup> The document identifies gender-based violence as a shared experience of all women:

“(..) in all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 28

<sup>375</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 185

<sup>376</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 185

<sup>377</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 27

<sup>378</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 112

<sup>379</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 117

<sup>380</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 112

The unequal power relations, being the root of gender-based violence, have led to “domination and discrimination against women by men”<sup>381</sup>. This patriarchal notion of gender relations is opposed to a gender perspective that permeates other parts of the document, considering both men and women without naming oppressors vs. oppressed. In this context, the document emphasizes that the advancement of women “should not be seen in isolation as a women’s issue.”<sup>382</sup>

### Identity:

Questions of the interactional construction of gender on a micro-level do not play a relevant role in the Beijing Declaration. The negative individual aspects of ‘doing gender’ and their structural consequences are addressed as follows:

“Girls are often treated as inferior and are socialized to put themselves last, thus undermining their self-esteem. Discrimination and neglect in childhood can initiate a lifelong downward spiral of deprivation and exclusion from the social mainstream.”<sup>383</sup>

Following this logic, the different treatment and education of young women undermine their confidence, which has structural consequences on their social position. The roots of gender inequality are not only to be located in structural discrimination, but also in individual practices intertwined with gender norms and stereotypes on a discursive level.

### Representational level:

Gender-based stereotyping is repeatedly matter of concern in the Beijing Declaration, as “(t)hroughout their entire life cycle, women’s daily existence and long-term aspirations are restricted by discriminatory attitudes”<sup>384</sup>. The document urges for the elimination of “prejudices, customary practices and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women”<sup>385</sup>. The formulation is an indicator for the gender perspective of the Beijing Declaration as both sexes, and not merely the attitudinal

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<sup>381</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 118

<sup>382</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 41

<sup>383</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 260

<sup>384</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 38

<sup>385</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 124k

discrimination of women, are addressed. Additionally, the “social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women”<sup>386</sup> are challenged. Although the Declaration acknowledges improvement in several countries, there is still a long way to go as “changes in women’s roles have been greater and much more rapid than changes in men’s roles.”<sup>387</sup>

#### **4.8.2. Differentiation and generalization**

The authors repeatedly emphasize the consideration of different equality categories, they point out that the Declaration “respects and values the full diversity of women’s situations and conditions and recognizes that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment”<sup>388</sup>, as well as the importance of “(a)cknowledging the voices of all women everywhere and taking note of the diversity of women and their roles and circumstances”<sup>389</sup>. Although the term ‘diversity’ usually indicates a more differentiated view on the interaction of social inequalities, the Declaration applies an additive concept of multiple discrimination, as “women face particular barriers because of various diverse factors in addition to their gender”<sup>390</sup>. Here, the specific interplay of social inequalities is simplified to a mere addition of the burden of discrimination.

Identified factors for these “additional barriers”<sup>391</sup> are, aside from the triad race, class and gender, categories such as language, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, family status, migrational or indigenous background, etc. Although repeatedly mentioned throughout the document, the concrete application of diversity perspectives is usually limited to the recommendation of collecting disaggregated data in reference to possible strategies.

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<sup>386</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 124k

<sup>387</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 27

<sup>388</sup> Beijing Declaration 3

<sup>389</sup> Beijing Declaration 4

<sup>390</sup> Beijing Declaration 31

<sup>391</sup> Beijing Platform for Action 255

## 5. Summary and conclusion

The specific historic backgrounds and social developments partly condition the different emphasis on certain topics at the two World Conferences: First of all, there is a focus on issues of war and peace in the Nairobi Declaration due to the Cold War and violent regimes such as the apartheid system in South Africa, which are not given that much attention at the Beijing Conference ten years later. In the latter, a consequent criticism of structural adjustment programmes and other measures imposed on the South give evidence of major concerns shared by the anti-globalisation movement in the 1990ies. Topics such as human rights and social issues play an important role at the Beijing Conference, whereas they are not represented that often ten years earlier.

Nairobi		Beijing	
Topics	Frequency	Topics	Frequency
1. Development	166	1. Equality	147
2. Economy	144	2. Education	128
3. Employment	117	3. Economy	126
4. Peace/War	117	4. Employment	101
5. Equality	115	5. Politics/Decision-making	99
6. Education	106	6. Human Rights	95
7. Parenthood/Children	86	7. Legislation	94
8. Politics/Decision-making	84	8. Social issues	92
9. Health	65	9. Development	87
10. Legislation	63	10. Violence	85

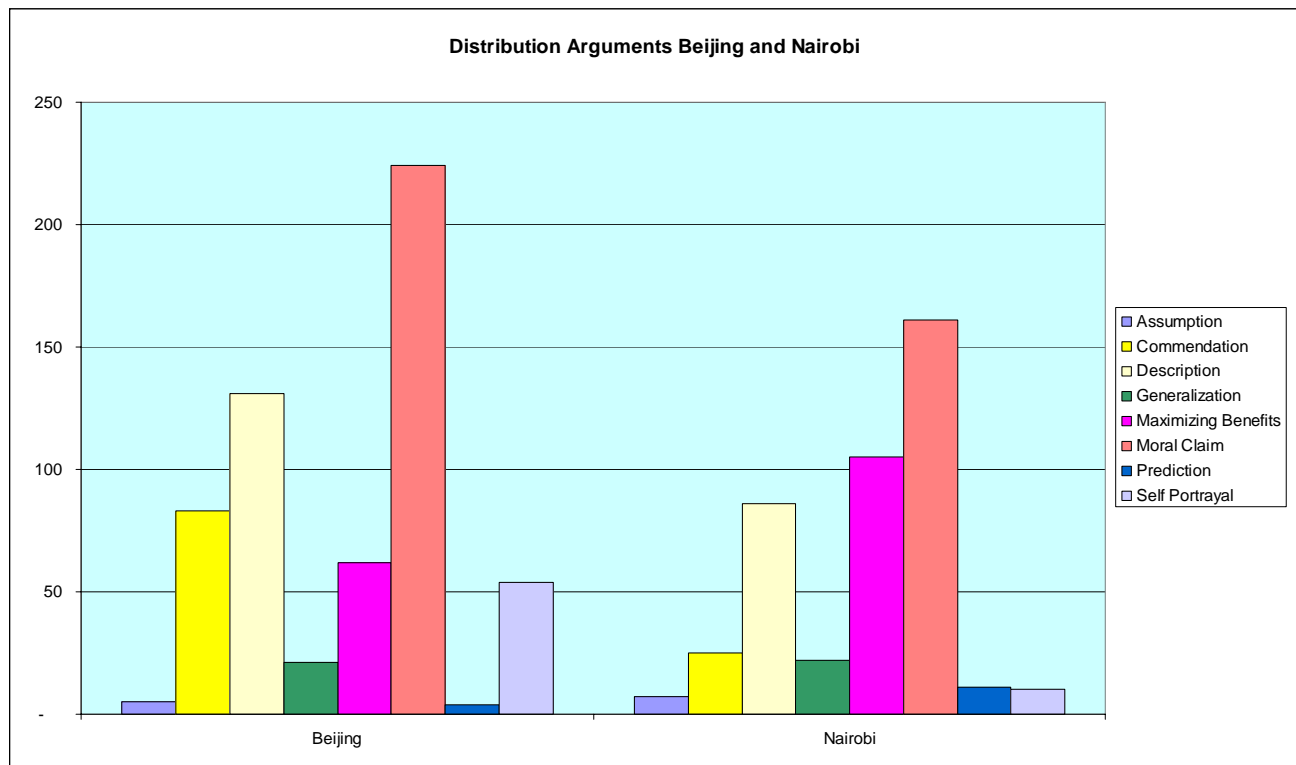
Table 7: The ten most frequent topics of Nairobi and Beijing

Important theoretical paradigms of the 1980ies provide an additional frame for perspectives in the Nairobi Declaration. Rooted in Marxism, the world system theory as well as the dependency approach target their critique foremost at economic structures with their unequal terms of trades and distributional inequalities. Against this background, the reference to economic structures permeates almost every analysis of inequalities at the Nairobi conference. Inter alia the main obstacle for the worldwide implementation of gender equality is located in the international world order. Ten years later, not all topics are retraced to or based on economic relations – the all-explanatory claim of

economic theories has obviously lost its hegemonic position in the international development discourse. The social and cultural dimension of development and the discursive production of identity markers with its entailing inequalities are taken into consideration as well.

However, inconsistencies regarding the parallel use of – partly antagonistic – theories can be found in both documents. Elements of the modernization discourse occur in the Nairobi and Beijing document, although they are much more subtle and harder detectable in the latter. This reflects the hegemonial status of this paradigm, affecting the mainstream discourse and even permeating critical concepts on the level of language and content. In certain parts of the documents, even in the same sentence dependency-based criticism of the economic exploitation of the South is combined with the notion of backward-directed traditions as barriers for development. The lack of a profound engagement with the concept of culture characterizes the Nairobi Declaration: cultural practices and traditions are mostly regarded as impediments for successful development and progress. The Beijing Conference develops a more complex perspective, as culture is considered as a set of shared values, attitudes and practices. However, while the document repeatedly emphasizes that customs and traditions are to be respected and preserved, they are often held responsible for the lack of development and advancement of women in other contexts.

The shift of argumentational strategies in the two documents seems very interesting at a first glance: In comparison, the Nairobi Declaration legitimates measures for the advancement of women overwhelmingly with a public profit, as the maximization of benefits is the second most frequently used argument in the document after moral claims. Improvements of women's situation are usually connected to greater purposes like the stabilization of family or community structures and rarely stand for themselves. In the text, the frequent reference to greater societal benefits is even recommended to legitimate policies for women. In the Beijing document, the maximization of benefits does not play such an important role anymore (from 25 % to 11%), while moral claims are by far the most important argument, usually based on human rights such as equality or justice. This may be explained by the consequent feminist struggles, promoting a broad acceptance for concerted affirmative action for women between 1985 and 1995. Measures for women's advancement do not need to be strategically backed up by other benefits anymore, but can be legitimized by their own purpose. Regarding this aspect, a discursive shift has taken place.



Graph 8: Distribution of Arguments Beijing and Nairobi

Regarding the ideological means of the documents, they are characterized by the interaction of two representational systems. On the one hand, the symbolic gender order locates male and female at the oppositional poles of different axes: culture/nature, ratio/emotio, subject/object and active/passive are only parts of the dichotomic representational system that is structured by gender. Taken as universal norm in this binary analytic, the male reference disappears and the female is constructed as deviance and other.

A similar process structures the North/South dichotomy: As authors such as Chandra Mohanty, Homi Bhaba or Edward Said point out, the ‘Third World difference’ as a “stable, ahistoric something” (Mohanty 2004: 19) is marked as deviant from the Western norm:

“In other words, it is only insofar as ,woman/women’ and ,the East’ are defined as others, or as peripheral, that (Western) man/humanism can represent him/itself as the center. It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center.”  
(Mohanty 2004: 42)

The Nairobi and Beijing documents are permeated by both representational systems: Gender and the North/South dichotomy structure the discourse, intertwining on several levels but most obviously in the construction of the 'Third World woman'. Here, the discursive colonization of the material and historical heterogeneities of Southern women's lives (Mohanty 2004: 19) is both criticized and applied in the documents, which reflects the reoccurring inconsistencies throughout both texts. However, concerning the consideration of structural categories and complex grounds of discrimination, a discursive shift can be noticed between the two World Conferences. While the Nairobi Declaration leaves the impression of lip servicing special interest groups from time to time, the Beijing document integrates categories in the analysis or development of strategies as well as repeatedly points out the importance of diversity policies.

Both documents repeatedly apply the methodological universalism criticized by Mohanty in "Under Western Eyes": Western perspectives and concepts such as family, household, etc. are directly transferred to other cultures without paying attention to local or cultural contexts. Regarding the sexual division of labour, for example, Mohanty urges a closer look at the different content, value and meaning of sexually divided work in its socio-cultural contexts, which are not universally applicable. The mere existence does not necessarily lead to the conclusion of women's universal suppression: "This results from a confusion between the descriptive and explanatory potential of the concept" (Mohanty 2004: 348), making Western women's life realities the universal referent.

"If such concepts are assumed to be universally applicable, the resultant homogenization of class, race, religious and historical specificities of the lives of women in the third world can create a false sense of the commonality of oppression, interests and struggles between and amongst women globally." (Mohanty 2004: 348)

Both Documents are not unsuspicious of disseminating those unreflected gender roles that they criticize in other contexts. The texts are permeated by presuppositions about gender roles, reflected in ascriptions such as the woman as caretaker, nourisher, environment agent, mother, etc. However, there is always a fine line between describing the actualities of women's living conditions and responsibilities and solidifying gender stereotypes and fixed identities otherwise.

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## **Appendix A: German abstract**

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Gender Diskurs der Internationalen Entwicklung vor dem Hintergrund von postkolonialer feministischer Kritik. Anhand einer Diskursanalyse der Dokumente der zwei UN-Weltfrauenkonferenzen 1985 in Nairobi und 1995 in Peking werden diskursive Prozesse und Verschiebungen in Bezug auf zwei zentrale Kritikpunkte postkolonialer Feministinnen herausgearbeitet: Auf der strukturellen Ebene interessiert die Auseinandersetzung mit Geschlechterverhältnissen: Wie werden diese beschrieben und gedacht? Von welchen Annahmen über Machtbeziehungen und Geschlecht gehen die Dokumente aus? Auf der Ebene der Identitäten steht der Umgang mit Kategorien und Differenzierungsprozessen im Zentrum der Analyse: Wie gehen die Dokumente mit Identitäten und Kategorien um? Gibt es (systematische) Differenzierungen? Spielen strukturelle Kategorien wie Ethnizität, Klasse, Behinderung, etc. eine Rolle? Als methodisches Rahmengerüst dient Siegfried Jägers Konzept der kritischen Diskursanalyse.

## Appendix B: Curriculum Vitae

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### persönliche Daten

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### Ausbildung

*2007-2010* Ausbildung zur Trainerin für Deutsch als Fremd- und Zweitsprache im Rahmen des DAF-Moduls an der Uni Wien

*2006/10-* Masterstudium Gender Studies an der Universität Wien;

*2003/10-* Individuelles Diplomstudium Internationale Entwicklung an der Universität Wien; Erweiterungscurriculum Cultural Studies

*1994/10-2001/06* “Khevenhüllergymnasium” in Linz (Oberösterreich)

*1989/10-1994/06* Volksschule in der „Kreuzschwesternschule“ in Linz (Oberösterreich)

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- 2010/05-2011/01**      Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeit am Antrag „Wissenschaftskarrieren und Geschlecht“ von Ilse Costas, Johanna Hofbauer und Birgit Sauer an der Universität Wien und WU
- 2009/11-2011/01**      Inhaltliche Mitarbeiterin von Education International (Internationale Bildungsgewerkschaft) im Rahmen der „Pay Equity“-Kampagne
- 2005/10-2005/06**      Tutorin für das Proseminar Transdisziplinäre Entwicklungsforschung I im Rahmen des individuellen Diplomstudiums Internationale Entwicklung
- 2003/10-2007/06**      Redakteurin des ÖH-Uni Wien Magazins „Unique“ sowie des „Progress“, Zeitung der ÖH-Bundesvertretung

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*Kenntnisse/Fähigkeiten*

- Fremdsprachen\_**      Englisch (fließend), Französisch (Grundlagen), Spanisch (Grundlagen)

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*Veröffentlichungen*

- 2008**      Kreissl, Katharina: Der westliche Blick – Der wissenschaftliche Umgang mit Gender Variance bei den nordamerikanischen Natives. In: Referat Gender Forschung (Hrg.): Reader Körper – Geschlecht – Sexualität. Universität Wien.